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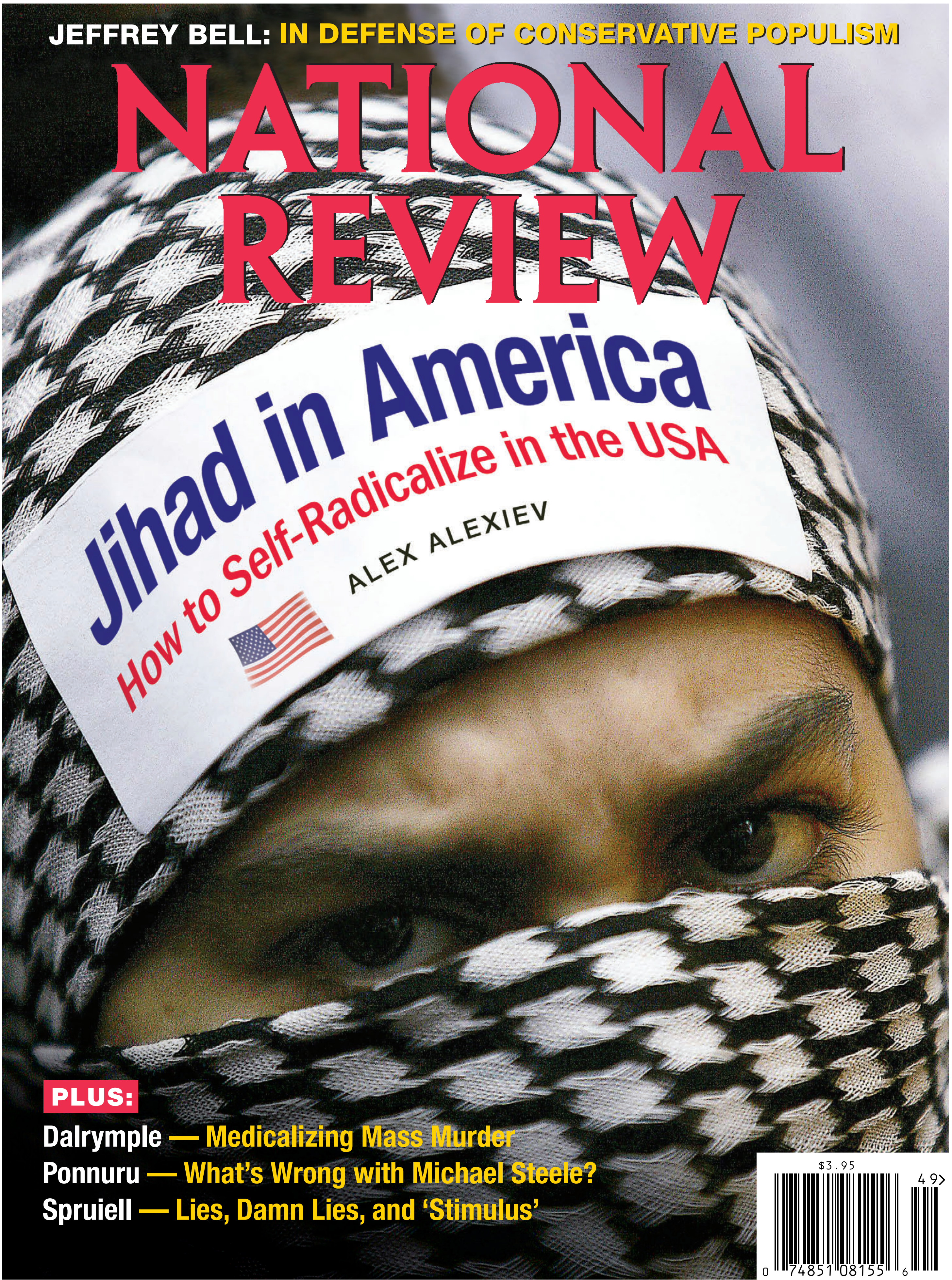
JEFFREY BELL: IN DEFENSE OF CONSERVATIVE POPULISM

NATIONAL REVIEW



Jihad in America

How to Self-Radicalize in the USA

ALEX ALEXIEV

PLUS:

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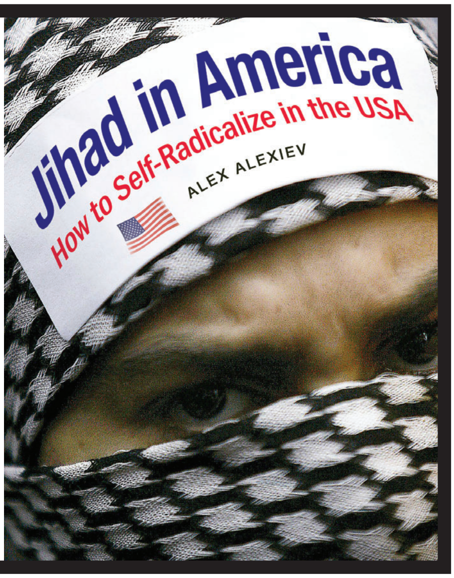
Jihad in America
How to Self-Radicalize in the USA
ALEX ALEXIEV

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Letters

Editorial Audit

In the "Week" section of the November 23 issue, the paragraph about the new-homebuyers credit is quite misleading. If one looks at the testimony of IRS Deputy Commissioner for Services and Enforcement Linda Stiff to the Ways and Means Committee, one gets a somewhat clearer picture. It is simply untrue that the IRS has no authority to demand documentation and that someone simply asserting that he bought a house and is eligible for $8,000 can do so with impunity.

As a seasonal tax preparer and one who has actual experience with individual returns, I am absolutely certain the claim is untrue. I can assure you that some refunds *are* being held pending proof of purchase, and that screening for those who claimed mortgage interest or real-estate taxes on their returns, with follow-ups, is happening (although such screening is not foolproof).

It is certainly true that the large volume of claimed credits, the short lead time for the IRS (which had to get ready, with no additional resources, in the middle of tax season), and the desire not to slow the issuing of refunds to a crawl have created an enforcement problem. Given the magnitude of the expenditure, assigning some additional funding to the IRS to go after incorrect credits would probably be money well spent, but I think you draw a lot of incorrect conclusions in your write-up.

Bob Brown
Canton, Conn.

THE EDITORS REPLY: Mr. Brown is clearly a well-informed adviser who would encourage clients to avoid fraudulent claims. Unfortunately, many people without such standards took advantage of the new-homebuyers credit. They were able to do so because the IRS did not want to slow down the flow of the stimulus checks by requiring documentation.

Mr. Brown cites the highly defensive testimony of Linda Stiff, the IRS's deputy commissioner for services and enforcement. We find the indictment of the IRS by the Treasury Department's own inspector general, J. Russell George, far more persuasive, and stand by our commentary.

Correction

Because of an editing error, the first sentence of Stephen Spruiell's article on page 29 of this issue falsely attributes a quotation to "a critic of the $787 billion stimulus bill." In fact it comes from the late economist and writer Stuart Chase, who was speaking of advertising.

Letters may be submitted by e-mail to letters@nationalreview.com.

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It happened whenever I checked the time. It came from waiters, bellmen and strangers on the street. "Nice watch," they would say. If they didn't speak English, they would just point and say "bello" or "magnifique." It happened everywhere on my winter trip through Europe. I remember it clearly because my watch got more attention than my luggage or my empty wine glass. One excited hotel clerk in Madrid pulled back his sleeve to show me the spectacular antique gold automatic he inherited from his grandfather. He tapped its face and said, "1933...What year is yours?" I didn't have the heart to tell him it was a 2009.

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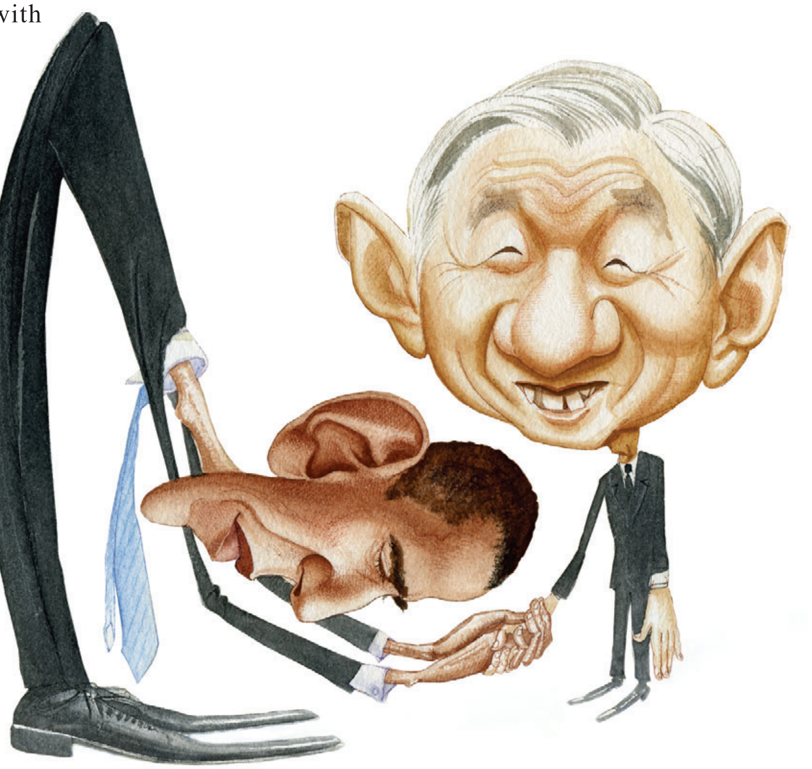
The Week

■ Apparently he confused the emperor of Japan with Andy Stern.

■ Sarah Palin's book, *Going Rogue*, arrived on the scene with the force of a three-megaton explosion. It's not a policy book, or a reputation-enhancing tome like Richard Nixon's *Six Crises*. Instead, it's a breezy memoir, relating her idyllic, outdoorsy Alaska childhood and her often rocky ride as John McCain's running mate. She settles scores against her antagonists within the McCain campaign—the ones who trashed her, anonymously, in print—in a dishy exercise in payback. It couldn't happen to nicer people. The book unleashed the sort of bilious attacks that attend anything Palin does, with, for example, the liberal opinion magazine *Newsweek* running a cover piece condemning her for ruining America, balanced by a companion piece condemning her for religious zealotry. Where does all this leave Palin? Probably roughly where she was before publication. If she wants to run for president, she'll have to spend time developing and mastering a policy portfolio and smoothing over the rough spots in her image. If she wants to be a significant force within conservatism, she's already there—and now she has the sales to prove it.



ROMAN GENN

■ The House, with only two votes to spare, passed Nancy Pelosi's version of health "reform." Then the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services confirmed that the bill would compromise senior citizens' health care while raising total costs. Polls show that the public continues both to oppose the Democrats' plans and to want Washington to spend more time on jobs than on health care. It is nonetheless full speed ahead for the Democrats. Harry Reid floated a new idea to pay for the legislation: higher Medicare taxes on high earners. And President Obama continues to seek to give the country this dubious medicine, even if he has to force it down our throats.

■ Thomas Jefferson, founder of the Democratic party, was so intent on upholding the mores of a republic that he abolished all precedence at state dinners, excepting only that women walked ahead of men. He must be Roto-Rooting his grave at the sight of his successor, Barack Obama, bowing to Emperor Akihito of Japan, months after bowing to King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia. The first time, press secretary Robert Gibbs denied that any bow had been made, though it was clearly visible in photographs; now the administration is saying that Obama "observes protocol," though no protocol requires presidents to kowtow. (That Nixon did it is no defense.) Obama's enemies tax him with arrogance; could it be that he is unsure of himself? Bow your head (in prayer) should he prove to be both.

■ Obama opened his Asian trip by calling himself "America's first Pacific president" and saying that "the Pacific rim has helped shape my view of the world." The biographical peg is a valid rhetorical technique, and Obama (Hawaii, Indonesia) has had a unique life. But he is not unique in having had a unique life, or even a Pacific presidential life. Ronald Reagan's took him to California, Richard Nixon's began there. John Kennedy's PT boat sank off New Georgia; George H. W. Bush's torpedo bomber crashed in the Bonin Islands; Lyndon Johnson, Nixon, and Gerald Ford also served in the Pacific in World War II. Dwight Eisenhower served in the Canal Zone and the Philippines before the war, Herbert Hoover ran mines in Australia and Manchuria, William Howard Taft was governor general of the Philippines . . . Oh, forget it. Obama's self-regard is as boundless as the Pacific.

■ Barack Obama spoke at the 20th deathday of the Berlin Wall by video hookup. He hailed the "rebuke of tyranny" and the "affirmation of freedom" that the fall of the Wall represented, as well as the East Berliners who tore it down and "our soldiers who kept watch" all the years it stood. Just so. Yet important things went unsaid. Obama recalled a generic tyranny without identifying it (Communism), nor did he shout out to Ronald Reagan, who helped keep Berlin going through dark days. He did mention himself. "Few would have foreseen . . . that a united Germany would be led by a woman from Brandenburg

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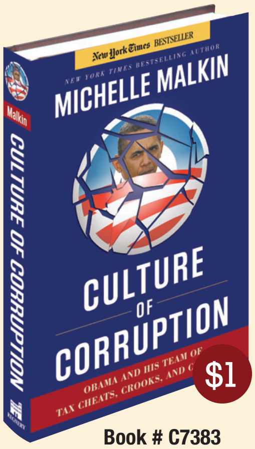
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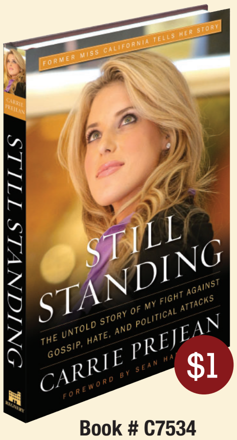
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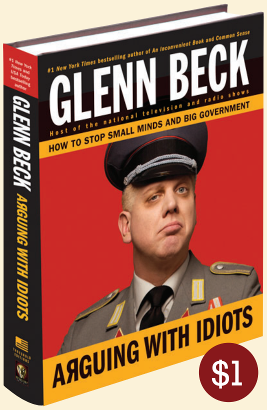
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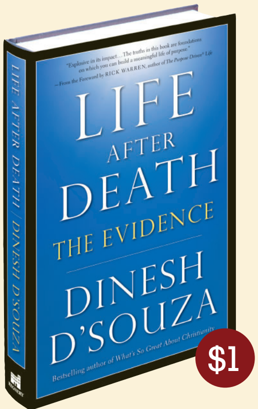
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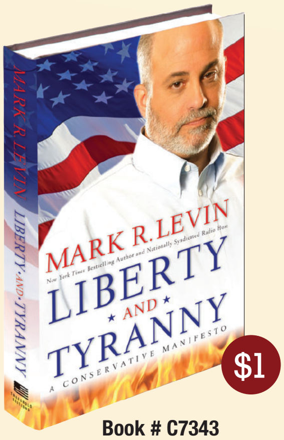
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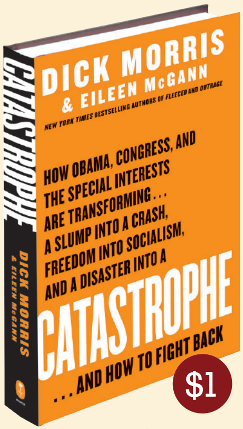
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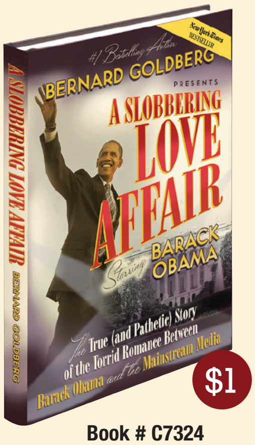
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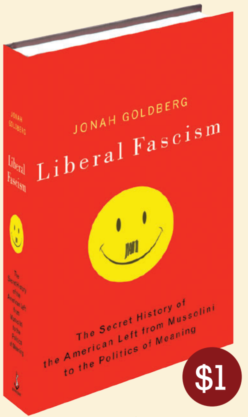
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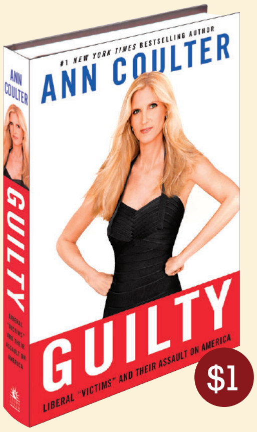
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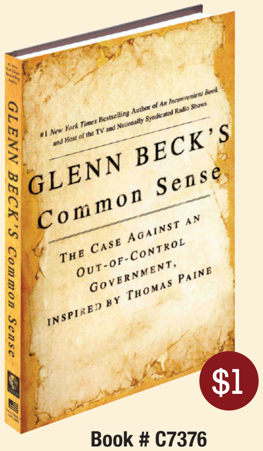
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[Chancellor Angela Merkel] or that their American ally would be led by a man of African descent. But human destiny is what human beings make of it." Would that destiny had made the American more history-minded, and more modest.

■ The treatment of jihadist terror as a mere law-enforcement matter, fit for civilian courts, was among the worst national-security derelictions of the 1990s. After 9/11, the Bush administration changed this policy by invoking the laws of war to try terrorists by military commission—giving them unprecedented due-process protections, including appellate review in the civilian courts. The Obama administration has no principled objection to the commissions, which it says it will use to try some terrorists. But even though Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, al-Qaeda's 9/11 mastermind, and his four co-defendants offered to plead guilty to those commissions and be executed, Obama has decided to try them as civilians. It is difficult to convey how dangerously foolish this course is. KSM and friends will use the proceedings to put the United States on trial, pressing for expansive discovery of government intelligence files. Having already gratuitously exposed classified information on interrogation tactics and other sensitive matters, the Justice Department will be in a poor position to argue against broad disclosure, even if it were so inclined. As the revelations multiply, potential intelligence sources and foreign spy services will reduce their cooperation, and the nation will be dramatically more vulnerable. Since Obama's Justice Department overflows with lawyers who spent the last eight years representing America's enemies, this self-inflicted blow to U.S. interests comes as no surprise. That doesn't make it any more excusable.

■ Serious and learned scholars of Islam fear that it is not compatible with freedom, modernity, and peace—that making it so would require a radical redefinition to which Islam is particularly resistant. Pat Robertson recently aired his own analysis. Islam, he said, "is not a religion," but "a violent political system bent on the overthrow of the governments of the world and world domination. . . . And I think we should treat it as such, and treat its adherents as such, as we would members of the Communist party, or members of some fascist group." There is a defensible thought here, an exaggerated reference to Islam's imperialist tendencies, but it is buried under the culpable stupidity of the formulation. (Why, by the way, would a religion cease to be a religion because it is wicked?) Robertson condemns the forces of "political correctness" that surround Islam with happy talk, but he aids those forces by reinforcing the notion that the alternative is bigotry.

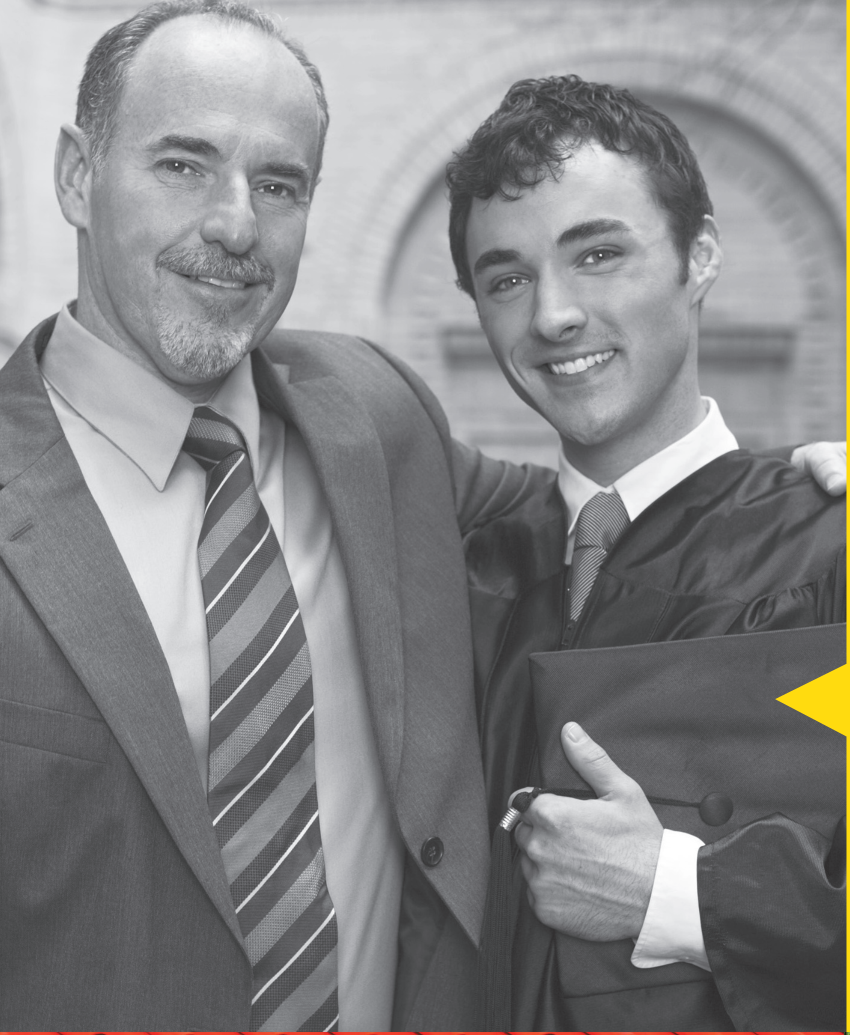
■ Just when you thought things might be getting better for the GOP, Gallup delivers some bad news: Among independent voters, Republicans are leading Democrats on the generic congressional ballot by 22 percent. *Only 22 percent.* Could there be more compelling evidence for what a rump the GOP has become, appealing only to anti-government nuts and tobacco-spitters in the South? It is always possible that the Republicans will drop all the way down to a 20-point lead among independents. And then what hope will the party have of emerging from the wilderness?

■ Al Gore believes in doing well by doing good. Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers, a venture-capital firm in which he is a partner, gave $75 million to Silver Spring Networks, a company that produces hardware and software for the electrical grid. In late October, the Energy Department awarded Silver Spring $560 million in smart-grid grants—inspired, no doubt, in some small part by Gore's tireless green advocacy. "Do you think there's something wrong with being active in business in this country?" Gore said during congressional testimony this spring when questioned about his investments. No, we do not. Gore is no longer a public official; he can put his money where his mouth is, and make money from his mouth. The public should note only that there is a layer of interest to Gore's advocacy. We think his ideas are mistaken and harmful—and if anyone wants to give us $3.4 billion for saying so, fine.

■ The unemployment rate hit 10.2 percent, sparking talk in Washington of the need for a new "jobs bill." Set aside the obvious point that the last time Washington constructed a jobs bill, it spent $787 billion without creating any jobs, as Stephen Spruiell explains on page 29 of this issue. Ask instead, What *should* a jobs bill look like? For starters, it might encourage hiring by cutting the payroll tax. The payroll tax adds to the cost of each new worker; cut the tax, lower the cost, increase the demand for labor. The government has done the opposite, extending unemployment benefits and funding the extension through a surtax on employers that was scheduled to expire at the end of the year. The extension simultaneously provides incentives for workers not to work and for employers not to hire them. What we need is for Congress to stop passing anti-jobs bills.

NICHOLAS KAMM/AFP

■ Sen. Chris Dodd (D., Conn.) has dropped a leaden lump of a bank-reform bill on Congress, a cumbrous compilation of regulatory overreach stewed in populist choler. Senator Dodd's plan would undermine the independence of the Federal Reserve and would weaken the FDIC, our best-functioning institution throughout the financial crisis. It would create a fistful of new regulatory agencies—an industry-wide financial-services regulator, a "financial stability" regulator, a consumer-protection regulator—as though we did not already have institutions charged with regulating banks, minding financial stability, and protecting consumers. The problem was not that we lacked regulators, but that our regulators performed poorly, and often at cross purposes with one another: The regulators who were supposed to be watching the banks were among those who helped inflate the housing bubble in the first place. Multiplying their number will multiply their problems, and rearranging their cubicles and the nameplates on their doors will not make them perform more intelligently. A better alternative would be to model reforms on what works, as Rep. Barney Frank (!) has started to do with his proposal for an FDIC-style



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guarantor that would insure "too big to fail" institutions while charging them an appropriate premium for doing so and standing ready to unwind them if necessary. Dodd is playing the wrong cards: One functional FDIC trumps three imaginary regulators.

■ Chrysler disbanded its electric-car division, named ENVI, short for "environmental." ENVI was a big part of Chrysler's pitch for government aid; former CEO Robert Nardelli touted a plan to market 500,000 plug-in vehicles by 2013. New

Give the Veep a Noogie

REMEMBER when the president shouted "Nobody messes with Joe!" to a joint session of Congress? He sounded a bit like a condescending high-school quarterback trying to buck up the paste-eating waterboy in front of the other players. Biden even smiled awkwardly, as if to say, "Aw, Barack, cut it out!" All that was missing was the presidential headlock and noogie.

The point of that emasculating exercise was ostensibly to tell the world that Joe Biden was going to be riding herd over how the stimulus money was spent. It's worth revisiting exactly what he said:

> That is why I have asked Vice President Biden to lead a tough, unprecedented oversight effort—because nobody messes with Joe. I have told each member of my Cabinet, as well as mayors and governors across the country, that they will be held accountable by me and the American people for every dollar they spend. I have appointed a proven and aggressive inspector general to ferret out any and all cases of waste and fraud. And we have created a new website called Recovery.gov so that every American can find out how and where their money is being spent.

JIM WATSON/AFP

In the cold, bracing light of today's facts, this is just plain bladder-draining hilarious. We've all heard the stories of vast sums of money funding a tiny number of jobs, and tiny amounts of money paying for vast numbers of jobs. Even better, the stories have for the most part been broken by such non-right-wing-decoder-ring-wearers as the AP and the *Boston Globe*. A story in the Fort Worth *Star-Telegram* reports that after spending $608.9 million, the White House got 1,458 jobs. That's nearly half a million dollars per job. Meanwhile, Alabama's Talladega County alone claimed that it stretched $42,000 into 5,000 jobs "saved or created."

"Saved or created" is itself the greatest weaselly locution yet coined in the 21st century. Just for the record, I save or create 500 push-ups every morning.

According to Recovery.gov, Arizona's 86th congressional district received $34 million to help the Navajo people. Trouble is, Arizona has only eight districts. In fact, Watchdog.org claims that the White House has given $6.4 billion to 440 nonexistent districts. That's five more fake districts than there are real ones.

On October 30, two weeks before the fake-district story broke, Ed DeSeve, the White House's top man on stimulus oversight—other than Biden—insisted that he'd been "scrubbing" the job estimates for fraud and discrepancies so thoroughly he had "dishpan hands and my fingers are worn to the nub." Unmessable Joe has insisted that the stimulus is working better than anyone hoped, creating a million jobs he cannot identify as he ignores the 4 million jobs we know the economy has lost.

There's so much deceit, incompetence, arrogance, and outright fantasy at work, it's like listening to a high-school kid explain how he maxed out a for-emergencies-only credit card buying a prom dress for his fictional super-hot girlfriend in Canada, even though she won't be able to make it to the party after all.

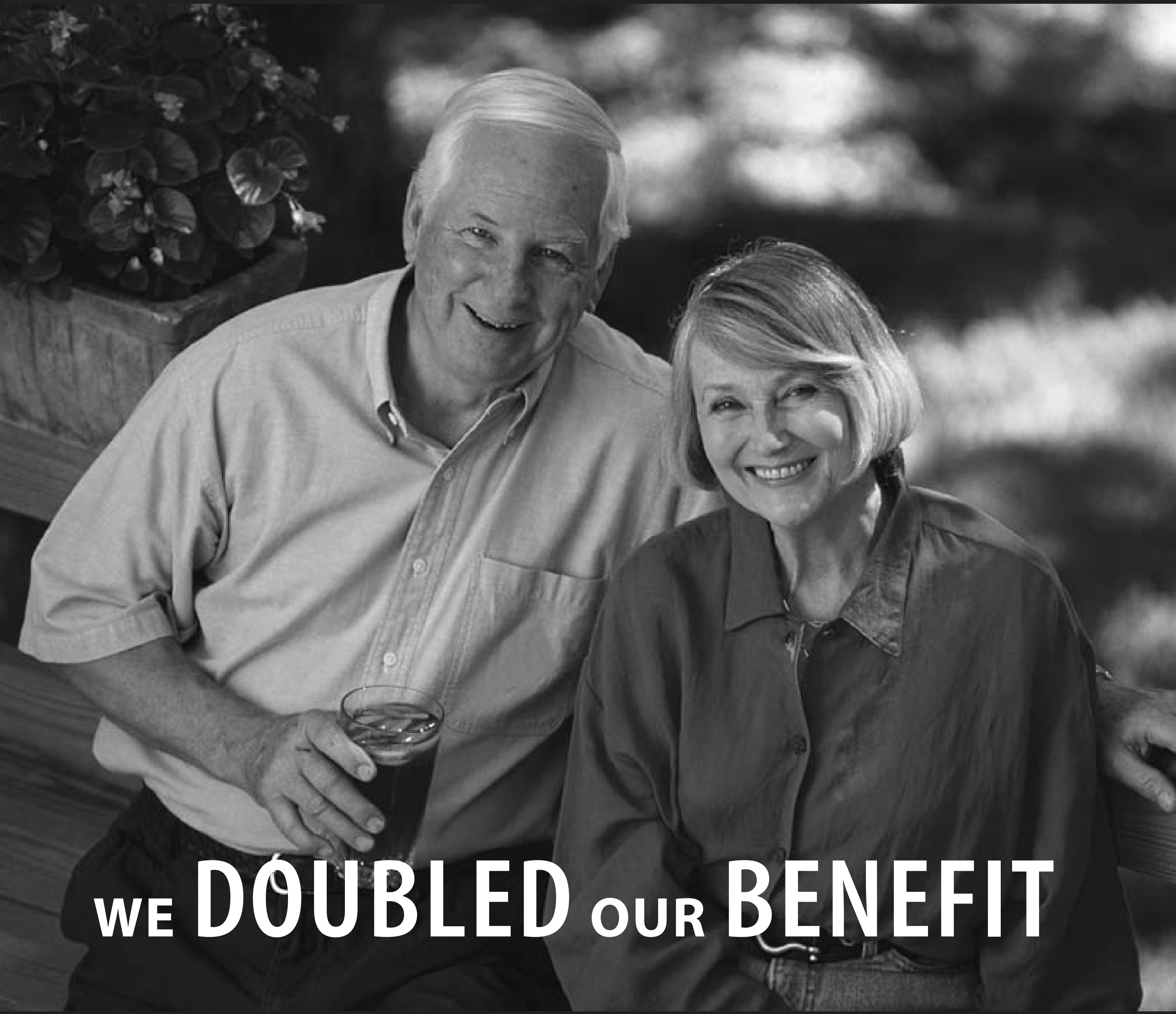
Last winter, Christopher Caldwell argued in the *Financial Times* that the stimulus bill, "whether it succeeds or fails, could be the Democrats' Iraq." He went on: "Like Iraq, it is a long-standing partisan project that is being marketed as an ad hoc response to a national emergency. It reflects the pre-existing wishes of the party's most powerful interest groups more than the pre-existing wishes of the country. Democrats are now liable to be judged by the standard they created when they abandoned the Bush administration over the Iraq war: you break it, you own it."

The comparison may be strained in parts, but the point is a good one. Perhaps the biggest similarity is that the stimulus may well cement the Obama brand, if it hasn't already. Despite a lot of rhetoric and actions to the contrary—compassionate conservatism, "Islam means peace," humble foreign policy, amnesty, etc.—Bush was defined by Iraq, and this restricted the political space in which he could maneuver. Every day, the stimulus looks more and more like Obama's InvisiFence, demarcating how far he can go politically before he gets zapped with the painful reality of the stimulus. In purely economic terms, the stimulus robbed the Treasury and the taxpayers of dollars he surely wishes he could spend on health care and other programs.

But just as significantly, the stimulus bleeds sincerity from his rhetoric. The president still spouts a great deal about post-partisan unity, economic expertise, and heartfelt concern for jobs, the deficit, and "sound science." On each score the stimulus boondoggle undermines his credibility.

Just imagine if Obama said "Nobody messes with Joe!" today. The only appropriate venue for such a statement now is either immediately before, or immediately after, giving the vice president a wedgie in the White House locker room.

—JONAH GOLDBERG



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CEO Sergio Marchionne has cut that expectation to 60,000. The Obama administration has not complained too loudly about this broken promise, perhaps because it knows that Chrysler cannot hope to repay taxpayers the billions it owes them by making little green cars in high-wage union shops. Still, Chrysler's decision is an embarrassment for Obama. His program to put a million electric vehicles on the road by 2015 is looking increasingly like a stimulus package for Japan.

■ The illegal population has shrunk in recent years, thanks to increased enforcement of the immigration laws and, less happily, the recession. One of the leading arguments for amnesty, that it is necessary to combat illegal immigration, has thus been disproven. But Homeland Security chief Janet Napolitano has just reiterated the administration's support for an immigration overhaul that includes a "tough and fair pathway to earned legal status"—in other words, an amnesty—for illegal immigrants. Perhaps the administration is just stringing Hispanic groups along. Or perhaps it figures that its margins in Congress are going to thin after the next election, so why not try now to guarantee millions of future Democratic votes? If you have worried about a large Democratic majority, worry still more about one with nothing to lose.

Obama's program to put a million electric vehicles on the road by 2015 is looking increasingly like a stimulus package for Japan.

■ Even though Fort Hood is a military base, and even though it's in gun-friendly Texas, it's a "gun-free zone": Soldiers are not allowed to carry weapons except for military purposes. And the massacre there was part of a pattern. Multiple-victim public shootings tend to occur in places where the carrying of weapons is prohibited—a category that includes everything from schools (Virginia Tech) to private businesses (Utah's Trolley Square Mall) to entire states (Illinois). Such policies may be constitutional—the military and private entities have every right to decide who may and may not carry guns on their property, and entire states can prohibit at least *concealed* weapons—but they are also unwise.

■ In the 2005 case of *Kelo* v. *New London*, the Supreme Court let a Connecticut city use eminent domain to kick residents out of their homes and take their land—not because the neighborhood was particularly run down, and not to build a road or pumping station or other form of infrastructure, but simply because the city thought it would collect more tax revenues if the area were developed for commercial use. The chief lobbyist for the development was Pfizer, the pharmaceutical firm, which had a research facility nearby. But not only has ground never been broken on the site, Pfizer now says it is leaving New London. At this point, the city's grandiose scheme is nothing more than a group of demolished buildings on a vacant plot. Also in ruins is the rationale for letting local governments seize private property and transfer it to other private owners, based on some bureaucrat's guesstimate of how much cash it might possibly yield someday.

■ From 2000 to 2008, the Manhattan Institute reports, one out of seven New York City taxpayers skedaddled. (Presumably, they were the ones who couldn't secure rent-controlled apartments.) The fundamental reason is high taxes: New York's state and city income taxes are justly infamous. They help finance unaffordable largesse: New York spends significantly more per capita on Medicaid, for instance, than most other states, and has the highest instance of Medicaid fraud—meaning that New Yorkers are overtaxed and then stolen from to boot. And one policy analyst estimates that the typical New York City taxpaying family is coughing up nearly $900 a year to support the city's very large population of (non-taxpaying) illegal aliens. Mike Bloomberg may find himself with fewer and fewer dinner parties to attend.

■ World leaders convened at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum have lowered their gazes from the thermosphere to the earth when it comes to global warming, relinquishing their dream of a legally binding international accord on climate change before December's meeting in Copenhagen. But they'll be back: Danish prime minister Lars Loekke Rasmussen, who is chairing the talks, said he would not let "anyone off the hook," which is a comical remark for a Dane to address to the United States and China—but maybe Denmark has some of that "smart power" we've been hearing about.

■ The mullahs in charge of the Iranian regime evidently believe that brutality pays. Supporters of theirs have been desecrating the grave of Neda Soltan, the young woman shot dead this summer during a mass demonstration to protest the rigged elections of that moment. On the Internet, Iranians can hear Neda's mother weeping and cursing. Despair and rage are running deep. Trading on its anti-American credentials as usual, the regime mobilized people to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the seizure of the U.S. embassy and the holding of its staff as hostages. Anti-regime protesters had the courage to exploit the occasion by coming out in tens of thousands on the streets of Tehran and several other cities. As they were being beaten and hounded, they kept up a chant: "Obama—either you're with us or with them." The president could surely have found words to say that he was on the side of those appealing to him to help them to a better and freer life. Instead he burbled boilerplate about seeking a relationship, "based on mutual interests and mutual respect," with what he was eager to call the Islamic Republic of Iran. The mullahs conclude that Obama at the end of the day is more with them, and their thugs can continue to do their worst.

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■ One of the most stirring of the Cuban oppositionists is Yoani Sánchez, a young woman who has gained some renown as a blogger. On a recent Friday, she and a few of her colleagues were going to an anti-violence march in Havana. They were met with violence. The usual goons stuffed Sánchez and another blogger, Orlando Luís Pardo, in a car. They beat them mercilessly; Sánchez resisted with all her might. Apparently, the goons felt that Sánchez and Pardo were more trouble than they were worth that day. Instead of locking them up, they dumped them on the sidewalk. Later, Sánchez wrote, "I managed to see . . . the degree of fright of our assailants, the fear of the new, of what they cannot destroy because they don't understand, the blustering terror of he who knows that his days are numbered."

■ If you think our own "progressives" are bad, be glad you don't live in Sweden. The obsession over there is for "gender equality." One Stockholm kindergarten even encourages parents to equip their sons with dresses and female first names. The furthest limits of this trend are being explored by Mr. Ragnar Bengtsson, who since September has been applying a breast-pump to himself in an effort to produce milk. "If it works and the milk turns out to have a high nutritional value it could be a real breakthrough," gushes (as it were) Mr. Bengtsson—whose next campaign, presumably, will be for the right to pump in public.

■ The City University of New York was a great conduit for upward mobility through the early and middle decades of the 20th century, with a glittering list of alumni in law (Felix Frankfurter), science (Jonas Salk), the military (Colin Powell), and other fields of endeavor. Sad, then, to read that 90 percent of CUNY freshmen could not solve a simple algebra problem when tested in 2008. Even arithmetic baffled them: Two-thirds could not convert a fraction to a decimal. This is after years of news stories about improved test scores and graduation rates for city schools. The usual response from local politicians is that the school system needs more money. Odd: New York State, with the city well in line, spent $15,981 per public-school student in 2007. The U.S. average is $9,666—just three-fifths of the New York figure. The city is in any case flat broke, with the mayor demanding 8 percent budget cuts. What's to be done? Ship students to Utah, perhaps. The Beehive State spent only $5,683 per student, yet math-test results are well-nigh identical with New York's.

■ Conservatives are well inured to the charge of racism, but it must sting when aimed at a leftist from accusers farther to the left. Here are ex-Weatherman terrorists Bill Ayers and Bernardine Dohrn, writing about the 2008 presidential campaign in the hard-left *Monthly Review*: "[Hillary] Clinton flagrantly appealed to white voters' identity as 'workers' or 'women' . . . and followed the ancient and dismal road of racial discourse that appeals to white supremacy, fear, and anxiety." Goodness! What happened to *pas d'ennemis à gauche*? But when you have spent your youth in radical-underground bomb factories, Hillary doesn't look like a leftist at all. We do not put much stock in the judgment of Ayers and Dohrn, but we assume they had their reasons for preferring Obama.

■ NASA's early-October LCROSS mission, if not a complete floperoo, delivered less than expected. The idea was to crash a probe into one of the permanently shadowed regions near the moon's south pole, then analyze the debris cloud thrown up for signs of buried ice. The cloud was much smaller than hoped for, and the results correspondingly doubtful, but yes, there did seem to be water molecules in it. This is less than astonishing. Water ice is a major component of the outer Solar System. Comets, for example, are largely made of ice, and many thousands of them must have hit the moon this past 4 billion years. NASA boosters (so to speak) are thrilled that our future moon bases will be self-sufficient in water. We wonder how, when this year's flagship lunar mission was smashing something into the moon to see what came up, NASA will ever coax enough funds from Congress to establish a permanent moon base.

FRANCES M. ROBERTS

■ CNN has divested itself of Lou Dobbs, the longtime commentator who joined the network at its founding. Aside from the occasional contributions of Bill Bennett, Dobbs was CNN's only high-profile non-liberal anchor. He is a crusader against illegal immigration (*CNN en Español* was not in his future) but also a tireless foe of free trade, his mind apparently impregnable by economics. Dobbs will be replaced by John King, the hologram monarch of CNN's multi-touch dominion. Which is to say, CNN is rejecting its last taste of vinegar for vanilla.

■ Neocutis, a company based in San Francisco, sells a skin cream that it says can "turn back time to create flawless baby skin again." Valerie Richardson, reporting for the *Washington Times*, quotes its website: "Inspired by fetal skin's unique properties, Neocutis's proprietary technology uses cultured fetal skin cells to obtain an optimal, naturally balanced mixture of skin nutrients." The cell line was developed using the skin of an aborted human fetus. Richardson also quoted the company's statement in response to critics: "Our view—which is shared by most medical professionals and patients—is that the limited, prudent and responsible use of donated fetal skin tissue can continue to ease suffering, speed healing, save lives and improve the well-being of many patients around the globe." And who can doubt that people with dry skin are, in their own way, suffering? It is a relief to learn that Neocutis is not exercising its legal rights thoughtlessly.

■ In *Pygmalion*, Prof. Henry Higgins could tell what part of London a Cockney lived in just by hearing his accent. Now Higgins may have been outdone by Prof. Kathleen Wermke

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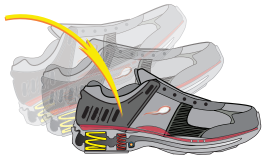

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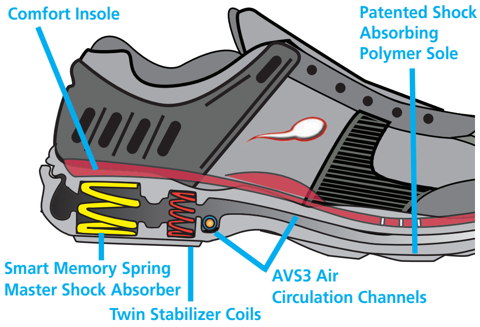

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of Germany's University of Würzburg, who can determine where a baby is from by listening to its cry. Newborns, she explains, "produce those melody patterns that are typical for their languages they have heard during their foetal life, within the last trimester." Thus voluble French babies' cries tend to rise toward the end, while those of dour German newborns tend to fall. A British newspaper speculates that research might reveal how "Geordie infants sound different from Brummies," who in turn would of course be different from the Scouse. Do Texas babies bawl with a drawl? Do New York City babies wail twice as fast and loud as others? (Answer: Yes—and they all ride the subway to work with us in the morning.)

■ Our congratulations to Mr. Ahmed Muhamed Dore of the Galguduud region of central Somalia, who just married for the sixth time. Mr. Dore claims to be 112 years old; his bride, Safia Abdulleh, is 17. Mr. Dore has 13 children and 101 grandchildren; two of his previous wives are still alive. Confronted with skepticism about his age, Mr. Dore cleared up the matter dispositively by producing the original of his birth certificate, written on goatskin. "Today God helped me realize my dream," said Mr. Dore following the wedding ceremony. May you continue to receive divine assistance, sir.

AT WAR

Jihad in Texas

In time of war, an army psychiatrist who redefined his identity (born in Virginia, he called himself Palestinian), abused his profession (he tried to convert patients to Islam), prayed with a jihadist cleric (Anwar al-Alwaki, formerly of Falls Church, now of Yemen), and complained, privately and in public, about the unacceptable burdens placed on Muslims obliged to fight fellow Muslims, shoots several dozen people, most of them servicemen and -women, murdering 13.

So how did our politicians and commentators react to Maj. Nidal Hasan's attack at Fort Hood? Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano said that what we most have to fear now is a possible wave of anti-Muslim sentiment. Journalist Michael Tomasky said that we should not draw any inferences from "Allahu akbar," the killer's battle cry before he opened fire, because it's just something that votaries of the religion of peace say in moments of stress. Everybody and his brother attributed Major Hasan's rampage to PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder), not that he ever experienced any trauma himself—but presumably he heard tales of it from his patients during the intervals when he was not trying to convert them to Islam.

This was the same political correctness that cocooned Major Hasan throughout his Army career. Fellow soldiers noticed his strident and unbalanced behavior: NPR reported that top officials at Walter Reed (his previous posting before Fort Hood) debated whether he was "psychotic." But no one ever reported him, for fear of discriminating against him—or being rebuked for discrimination. "They're afraid of getting an equal-opportunity complaint that can end careers," one Hasan classmate told *Time*. When Gen. George Casey, Army chief of staff, worried lest "diversity . . . become a casualty," he was effectively telling the ranks: Keep your lips zipped.

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PAUL J. RICHARDS/AFP

The free flow of ideas in this country means that pernicious ones will lodge in the minds of very bad actors. The solution is not to restrict freedom, but to take ideas seriously—to flag them and combat them; to monitor those who take ideas to extremes and to come down on them when they first cross the line to incitement or action; certainly to keep them out of positions of power or responsibility, even to the rank of major. This becomes especially important if the jihad draws tactical conclusions from Fort Hood. Since the runup to 9/11, al-Qaeda and its spawn have gone for the big targets: landmarks, airliners, transportation systems. Suppose they now shift to what one Klan theoretician called "leaderless resistance": one, two, many Fort Hoods.

We have a difficult enough problem as it is—and we cannot address it unless we honestly identify and discuss what is happening around us.

AT WAR II

Time's Up, Hamlet

President Obama's deliberations on Afghanistan have begun to take on an element of farce.

It is understandable that he wants to think carefully before almost doubling our force in Afghanistan, as Gen. Stanley McChrystal has asked him to do. But let's remember: McChrystal is Obama's hand-picked general, sent to Afghanistan to carry out the "comprehensive" strategy Obama announced in the spring. Obama isn't drilling down on a strategy that has failed, as Bush had to do in Iraq at the end of 2006. He is reconsidering his strategy before it has been given a chance to work.

The reason for doing this, we are told, is the fraudulent Afghan election and the corruption of Hamid Karzai. All the erstwhile Afghanistan hawks on the left have made Karzai central to their anti-war case. Karzai's performance is undeniably a problem, but a strategy of counterinsurgency regards relatively clean, functional government as a goal, not a precondition.

The Obama administration would be wise to see Karzai as a

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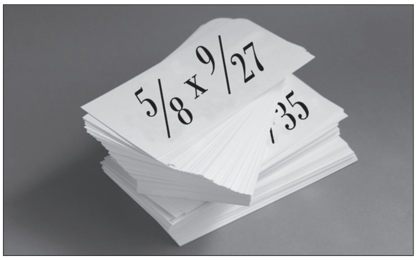

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Dr. Murray H. Siegel teaches Mathematics at Central Arizona College. His courses include various remedial classes and a two-course sequence for future elementary school teachers, the subject matter of which can be found in **Basic Math**. Professor Siegel received his M.Ed., Ed.S., and Ph.D. from Georgia State University.

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flawed partner rather than a punching bag. The threats to cut him loose prior to the election only pushed him into the arms of exactly the kind of people we want him to avoid and to isolate. If he cannot rely on us, why would he not fortify himself politically with the support of key indigenous players, even tainted ones?

If we want Karzai to improve, we will need to work through problems with him rather than huff and puff with ultimata (pulling out, or drawing down) that we can't follow through on without damaging our interests. And we will need to get a better handle on the security situation. Iraqi prime minister Nouri al-Maliki had many of the same failings as Karzai while we were permitting his country to collapse all around him in 2006. Only when the surge improved security did he become a stronger and more popular leader.

No such transformation will happen in Afghanistan unless McChrystal gets his additional troops. Obama gives every sign of wanting to find a clever way around this fact, needlessly complicating what is a momentous but relatively simple decision. If the Afghan War is important enough that we need to win it, and if counterinsurgency is the only way to do that—conclusions that most members of Obama's national-security team, from Hillary Clinton to Bob Gates to chairman of the joint chiefs Admiral Mullen, have already reached—then McChrystal must get his troops.

Resistance to McChrystal centers on the White House politicos. They worry about Obama's expending time and energy defending the war when he has priorities he cares about much more—namely expanding the government here at home. Incredibly enough, the cost of the war has reportedly become a major element of the White House's deliberations. Obama nearly tripled the projected national debt over ten years in the first few months of his administration without a second thought, but he hesitates at an additional expenditure—that could always be offset elsewhere—to win one of the nation's wars.

It has been a long, unsatisfactory process of deliberation, but Obama can still put aside politics, and his own micromanaging hesitations, and do the right thing: give his general what he needs to succeed.

ABORTION

The Stupak Victory

OUR very Democratic House just held the most important and politically significant vote on abortion since 2003 (at least)—and pro-lifers won big. Rep. Bart Stupak, a pro-life Michigan Democrat, offered an amendment to Speaker Nancy Pelosi's health-care bill to ensure that the new government-run insurance program it creates cannot cover abortions, and that the bill's new subsidies for buying health insurance do not apply to policies that cover abortion. For months Pelosi had been blocking a vote on the amendment, but enough pro-life Democrats demanded a vote as a condition for voting for the bill that she relented. Sixty-four Democrats joined nearly every Republican to vote for the Stupak amendment. The bill then narrowly passed the House.

Rep. Bart Stupak

KEVIN DIETSCH/UPI

Liberals, shocked to discover that public opposition to federal encouragement of abortion has persisted into the Obama era, have reacted with disbelief. Some pro-abortion Democratic congressmen are threatening to vote against the final version of the bill if it includes the amendment. Rep. Lynn Woolsey (D., Calif.) wants to investigate the Catholic bishops' lobbying activities. (Restricting federal funds for abortion is now being cast as an act of religious oppression.) Rep. Louise Slaughter (D., N.Y.) is one of many pro-choicers who warn that the back alley will return. Yet the Hyde amendment has blocked federal Medicaid funds from paying for abortion for more than three decades, and nobody has produced any evidence that it has led to anything of the kind.

President Obama went oleaginous rather than hysterical. He just wanted to maintain the status quo on abortion funding, he claimed, and added that the "strong feelings" about the amendment suggested that it did not meet his test. In the months leading up to the amendment, however, it was pro-lifers who were voicing objections to the health-care bills' funding of abortion. Obama did not worry about a disruption to the status quo then. Instead he accused the pro-lifers who noticed it of "bearing false witness." Such conduct is exactly what one would expect of a man who favors federal funding of abortion but does not want to have to speak up for it.

The Stupak amendment extends the principle that the Hyde amendment applies to Medicaid—that federal money should not facilitate abortion—to new health-care programs. It changes the status quo only because it affects additional people, as a result of the Obama administration's ambitions to remake American health care. No serious opponent of abortion in either party could vote in good conscience for health-care legislation without the amendment.

The debate should give pause to those who insist, year after year and without much evidence, that pro-lifers are on the losing side in American politics. The Stupak vote came the weekend after pro-lifers won the governorships of New Jersey and Virginia. The abortion lobby's low opinion of democracy is receiving new confirmation all the time.

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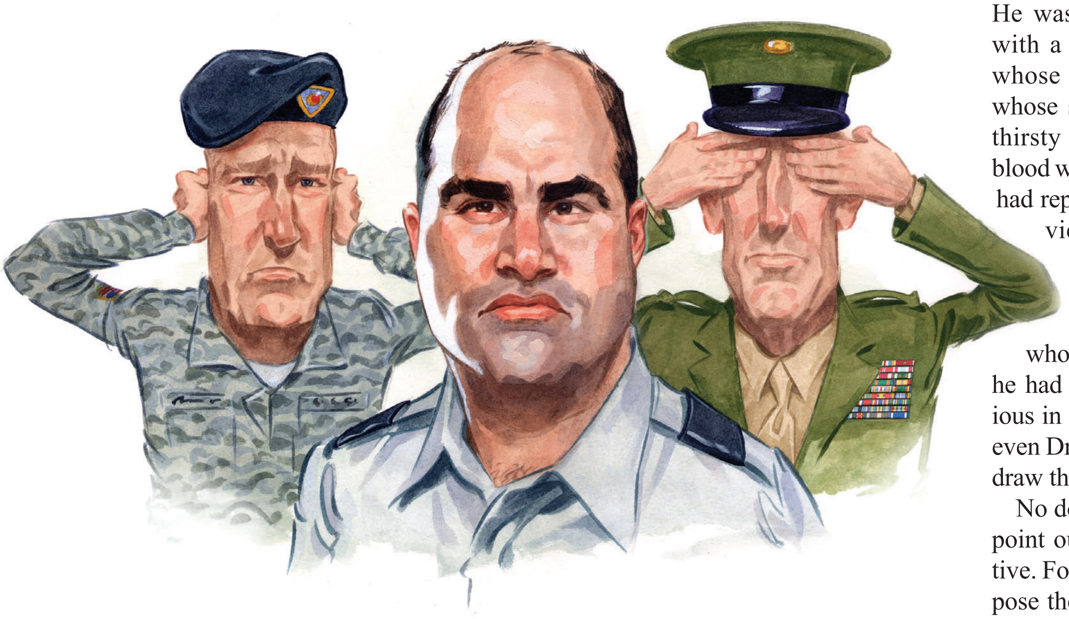

DARREN GYGI

PC Unto Death

The Fort Hood massacre and the failure of courage that permitted it

BY THEODORE DALRYMPLE

Twenty years ago I was confronted by a patient who dressed in battle fatigues with a German flag sewn onto his sleeve—not a healthy sign, I thought. He had never been in the army, nor was he about to volunteer for it; he was, if anything, inclined to pudginess rather than to martial muscularity; his struggle was not with the enemies of his country but with daily life, and he sweated profusely from a deep and inextinguishable inner anxiety.

Far from being violent, he told me, he was a pacifist. Indeed, he was so pacifist that he was a firm vegetarian. Violence and cruelty to animals appalled him utterly; indeed, he felt so strongly about it, he said between gritted teeth, that he sometimes felt like going into his nearest supermarket (where I too shopped) and shooting everyone at the meat counter. I did not find it altogether reassuring that he had recently joined a gun club; but he had never so far been in trouble with the police.

For some time afterwards I lived in mortal fear of the news. One day, I thought, he would go into the supermarket and mow down the monstrous regiment of carnivores in the name of the Herbivore Liberation Front. Then it would come to light that he had consulted me several times and the question would naturally be asked why I, with the superhuman faculties granted to all doctors, had not stopped him. Why indeed?

The answer, I trust, is clear. He had as yet committed no crime; nor did what he felt like doing constitute the kind of definite threat against specific individuals that justifies a doctor's breaking patient confidentiality and going to the police, who would in any case have regarded my information as mere tittle-tattle of little probative value. Protective custody is not a sanction known to the rule of law.

The case of Maj. Nidal Malik Hasan is surely rather different. The standard of proof of dangerousness necessary to take action against a soldier must surely be rather lower than that required to bring a criminal prosecution against a civilian. He was in frequent electronic contact with a man of known Islamist views, whose mosque he had once attended, whose sermons were eloquently bloodthirsty and for whom the shedding of blood was a religious duty; his colleagues had reported that he had said that, in his view, sharia law took precedence over the Constitution; he was loud in his opposition to the foreign policy of the country in whose armed services he served; and he had become more and more punctilious in his religious observances. I think even Dr. Watson would have been able to draw the inferences.

No doubt civil libertarians would here point out the problem of the false positive. For the sake of argument, let us suppose there are ten Army psychiatrists in contact by e-mail with Islamist fanatics, who believe in the precedence of sharia law, who oppose the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and who are increasingly punctilious in their religious observances. The fact that only one of them has indulged in a massacre would suggest that, if all of them had been dismissed, nine of them would have been dismissed unnecessarily and unfairly: and this would be an injustice and a breach of their human rights.

The initial official response to the events in Fort Hood showed just how deeply this kind of thinking has triumphed over the most elementary common sense. General Cone, the base's commander, said, "What we're looking for is people with personal problems, not at all related to their religion—not at all." The Army's chief of staff, General Casey, said, "What happened at Fort Hood is a tragedy, and I believe it would be a greater tragedy if diversity became a casualty here."

What this appears to mean is that General Cone would not be worried by a soldier's exhibiting all the signs that Major Hasan exhibited, provided only that he were happy, contented, and comfortable in his own skin: assuming, of course, that such a state of mind could be reliably recognized. And General Casey appears to have taken "We Are the World" as the theme song of the Army. It is right that there should be no racial prejudice, of course, but it is stupid to

Mr. Dalrymple was a physician and psychiatrist to British prisoners.

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And is he bothered that the white-bearded gentleman from the North Pole doesn't appreciate the competition? Hardly. "Santa doesn't like it? Too bad," Bisceglia said. "Free is a part of the way we do business at Stauer. If Claus has a problem with that, he can wiggle his nose and meet us in court."

Representatives for Mr. Claus claim that Santa's regular holiday route will go on as scheduled and that there are "no plans for legal action." Speaking on behalf of Stauer, Bisceglia added, "Santa and I go way back. Santa doesn't stay mad for long. In a few days we'll hash it out over mugs of hot cocoa. I'll get a wooden sled and Mrs. Claus will get that new pair of pearl, emerald, and ruby earrings." But Bisceglia may be on the naughty list next year.

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suppose that there should be no characteristics whatever that disqualify someone from serving. Must organizations embrace criminal lunatics in the name of diversity? For, of course, criminal lunatics are part both of the community and of life's rich tapestry.

General Cone's reaction implied that Major Hasan's actions had nothing to do with the religious ideology that he espoused, and that his actions were therefore an emanation from some mysterious personal psychopathological swamp. That Major Hasan was a very troubled man is undoubtedly true; a more balanced person who opposed the wars, for example, would have found ways of doing so other than random massacre of erstwhile colleagues.

But when a man acts as Major Hasan did, it is obvious that he is in the grip of some general ideas, in this case those of militant Islamism. No merely Freudian neurotic ever went round shooting people and shouting "Allahu akbar!" There is thus in this case a terrible symbiosis between personal psychopathology and ideology: as, indeed, there would have been had the patient I have described above done what he said he would like to do.

Let us briefly consider a phenomenon that has nothing to do with Islam, one indeed that was militantly secularist and anti-religious: that of the Tamil Tigers of Sri Lanka. For a time they were the world leaders in suicide bombings; they can be said to have invented the whole modern genre. They were also suicide bombing's most successful practitioners, for they murdered presidents, prime ministers, and generals with the technique, as well, of course, as countless bystanders.

Apparently there was never a shortage of volunteers for the job: the ideological poison of the Tamil Tigers had worked its way pretty thoroughly into the body politic, and in any human group there are always people enough prepared to act extravagantly against their own interest, believing themselves thereby to be doing good when they are in fact committing the most obvious evil.

What is even more alarming, perhaps, is that the ideological poison spread very widely to middle-class and highly educated and no doubt politically moderate Tamils living abroad. Whatever the deficiencies of the Sri Lankan government, nothing could justify the manifest evil of the Tigers, which was as obvious as any such evil could be; yet thousands of Tamils abroad, who but for the ideology would never have dreamt of giving aid and comfort to murderers, and who in their day-to-day conduct were law-abiding and in their personal relations perfectly decent and reasonable, regularly demonstrated in the Tigers' favor or supported them financially. As in any situation in which an unscrupulous extremist ideology spreads in a population, it became difficult to distinguish what was done voluntarily from what was coerced or the result of intimidation. It is almost impossible to get to the bottom of this question, since testimonies are so various and contradictory. But there is no doubt that evil in the name of a higher good has an attraction for much of mankind, particularly the intellectual part of mankind. You need certain powers of abstraction, after all, before you can justify the killing of people at random for the sake of a distant goal.

The difference between the Tamil Tigers and the Islamists, of course, is that the Tigers had a rather limited aim, at least in the first instance: an independent Marxist-Leninist homeland for Tamils in northern Sri Lanka. So while their crimes were horrible, individually as repugnant as any committed by Islamists, the threat that they posed, and the attraction that they exercised, was geographically and demographically limited. The rest of the world could afford to remain indifferent to them; but even so, the evil infected distant populations.

Islamism is more serious because it is a vastly more ambitious ideology and there are many more people susceptible to its siren song. Its demands could never be met, of course; viewed dispassionately, they are ludicrous. But reason plays a very restricted role in the beliefs of the disgruntled, however intelligent the disgruntled may be; two thousand years ago Cicero said that there was nothing so absurd that some philosopher has not already said it, and he might have added believed it too.

For someone like Hasan, who seems not to have been blessed with the kind of happy temperament that allows an easy passage through life, Islamism was both an answer to his problems and a problem in itself. On one hand, it satisfactorily explained the difficulties and humiliations that he had experienced while offering him a way to overcome them; on the other, it demanded of him that he be someone he was not, for example someone uninterested in, and not attracted to, the strip club that he visited shortly before his killing spree. For a lonely, self-absorbed egotist, unable properly to put his travails into any kind of perspective, this would have created an unbearable tension. What better way to resolve his tension than to kill himself (it is unlikely that he thought he would survive his spree) while giving vent to his hatred and rage in an ideologically acceptable way, which predictably made him a hero for his "spiritual" mentor, the imam Anwar al-Awlaki, whose sermons were also attended by some of the September 11 hijackers?

Hatred has always been the strongest political emotion and resentment the most durable; they are the emotions that effect the ideological and psychological transmutation of good into evil and evil into good. Islamism is far from the only ideology whose key is hatred, but it is the one that transformed Major Hasan from being a man in personal difficulty into being a horrifying criminal. I suspect that Generals Cone and Casey know this perfectly well. **NR**

No merely Freudian neurotic ever went round shooting people and shouting 'Allahu akbar!' There is thus in this case a terrible symbiosis between personal psychopathology and ideology.

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May 14 (Fri)	Lisbon	Tour of Cascais & Sintra
May 15 (Sat)	Lisbon	Depart for Amadouro Coimbra City Tour (en route) Afternoon seminar, evening cocktail reception
May 16 (Sun)	Regua Pinhão	Morning seminar. Palacio de Mateus tour Gourmet dinner at Vintage House Hotel Late-night cigar smoker
May 17 (Mon)	Pinhão	Morning and afternoon seminars Afternoon Port wine lecture & tasting
May 18 (Tue)	Salamanca	City tour (all day) Late-night cigar smoker
May 19 (Wed)	Vega de Terron	Castelo Rodrigo tour. Afternoon seminar Evening cocktail reception Late-night Portuguese troupe performance
May 20 (Thu)	Lamego Bitetos	City tour. Afternoon seminar Dinner at Alpendurada Monastery Late-night smoker
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May 22 (Sat)	Porto	Debark

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■ **HELP IS ON THE WAY:** This never-before-seen photo captures the rapid shipment of free Bankers Armored Safes (left) that are now being shipped to U.S. citizens all across the country. The World Reserve is also making available the larger Bankers Grand Armored Safes (right) free to the general public who beat today's published deadline to buy up the newly released Collection of never-circulated U.S. Gov't issued coins and currency. Those who get through by calling the National Delivery Hotline at 1-866-964-2951 and beat the 72 hour order deadline will get the Armored Safes for free.

By Shawn Oyler

UMS - Imagine finally getting something that will never lose its value.

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"When Americans get their hands on this Safe and their very own personal hoard of U.S. Gov't Coins, they'll really do a double take. Everyone will feel like they just won the lottery," he said. ■

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7 Smart places to stash your cash

By Aaron Robinson

So you're still hiding money under the mattress or in the bread box?

Well, you're not alone. Ever since financial institutions have been dropping like flies, millions of Americans have stopped relying solely on their banks.

1. Be sure your bank is insured. Over 100 banks have failed so far this year. So, if you're not sure if your bank is insured, find out right away.

2. Start and grow a coin collection. Coin collections are tangible assets that will always keep their face value, instead of just owning stocks that could depreciate or lose you money.

3. Keep some cash safe at home. Cash is King. Believe it, but remember not to keep it in a thief's favorite spot; like in the bread box or the mattress. These will never have the protection that a quality home safe can provide.

4. Savings Bonds, an old favorite. Savings Bonds are an easy way for your money to stay safe in the future. However, if lost or stolen they could be difficult to replace unless the serial number was kept in a safe place.

5. Gold and silver still shine. If you own gold or silver, great, hold on to it. But if you don't, one of your best bets is to try to get as many U.S. Gov't issued gold and silver coins as you can.

6. Hold on to real estate. With interest rates at historic all-time lows the market is sure to recover and property values will once again bounce back. So those who hold on to their homes for the long term will likely reap the benefits of these investments.

7. Buy a good safe. Home safes become an absolute necessity during economic turmoil. But, because of the huge spike in recent sales, safes may be hard to come by.

With all this you'll be much safer, just in case your bank is the next to fail. ■

Steele Trap?

Making the best of an ill-starred party chairman

BY RAMESH PONNURU

'MICHAEL is new. He's had a learning curve." Katon Dawson, chairman of the South Carolina Republican party, rendered that judgment about Michael Steele, the chairman of the national party, last spring. Curt Anderson, one of Steele's top advisers, agreed, writing in *Politico* that Steele had "made some missteps in a few media appearances." Steele himself agreed, pledging, "It won't happen again."

Steele had been elected in large part because Republicans saw him as a promising spokesman for the party. He had served as chairman of the Maryland Republican party and as lieutenant governor. Republicans around the country, knowing only that he was conservative and black, had rooted for him to win his campaign for the Senate in 2006. When he lost, nobody blamed him: It was a tough state in a rough year.

But Republicans began reconsidering Steele just weeks after he won the race for chairman of the Republican National Committee. He trashed Rush Limbaugh on CNN—calling his show "ugly"—and then apologized to him. As a coda to the controversy, Steele told the *Washington Post*, "I'm in the business of ticking people off." Steele then fumbled an interview with *GQ*, making clumsy remarks about abortion that many social conservatives interpreted as pro-choice. Steele then had to offer them reassurances. At the end of March, Steele told another CNN interviewer that there was a "rationale" behind his apparent gaffes: "It's all strategic." For good measure, he added that he would run for president if God wanted him to.

Republican officeholders, who don't want to have to defend or criticize the party chairman in public, found themselves in that position multiple times within a matter of days. Meanwhile, party insiders grumbled both about Steele's gaffes and about his firing of longtime employees of the Republican National Committee. They talked of ousting Steele as chairman. Republican committeemen also pushed for limits on his control of RNC spending. (He had spent $19,000 refurbishing his office, which he considered "way too male.") They insisted that their concerns were institutional rather than personal, but Steele allies took the campaign as an attack on him. He was forced to accede to the demands.

The mutiny has died down. Republicans are taking their victories in the November elections as signs of a rebound, and Steele is benefiting from the good feelings. Contacted recently, some former critics in the Republican party say that Steele has made good on the pledge. "It was clearly a rocky start but I think he's doing better," says David Norcross, a Republican committeeman from New Jersey. Ron Kaufman, a committeeman from New Jersey who ran the campaign of a rival candidate for Steele's position, allows that Steele "made some rookie mistakes" but says that he has now shown that "he's got a good learning curve."

Steele's position thus looks much more secure than it did in the spring. But Republican happy talk aside, there is no evidence that Steele has moved very far on the learning curve. It will happen again.

It already has. In August, Steele told *Politico* that he now understood that he was speaking for the entire Republican party, not just himself, and would conduct himself accordingly. Later that month, he was on a conservative radio show in Missouri when the host launched a series of personal attacks on the Republicans' Senate candidate there (Roy Blunt, for whom my wife used to work). Steele responded, "I agree with you." When the host slammed the House Republican leader, John Boehner, and his colleagues as "an absolute freaking joke," Steele replied, "I'm with you. I'm 1,000 percent with you. I agree with you. I absolutely agree with you." On another radio station in Missouri, he praised the Democratic candidate for the Senate: "Robin Carnahan is a friend of mine. . . . I'm in a tough spot."

In a September speech, Steele praised ACORN for "working in the community and helping the poor" and said that its leader, Bertha Lewis, had "done a phenomenal job getting out in front of" the organization's scandals. "I applaud her." Congress voted the same month to strip ACORN of federal funding, with Republicans leading the charge.

Some conservatives have wondered whether Steele is a closet moderate, especially after that *GQ* interview. But Steele's verbal blunders do not reflect any consistent factional orientation; all they have in common is his propensity to say things that are inappropriate for a party chairman. On Bill Bennett's radio show, where Steele is a regular guest host, he criticized conservatives for "slammin' and rammin'" Sonia Sotomayor when she was up for the Supreme Court. ("What is the benefit of the party chairman injecting himself into the confirmation process?" asks one strategist. "No matter what he says he makes the senators look political.") But Steele also said of party moderates, "We'll come after you." (He later explained that by "we" he meant other people, and by "come after you" he meant educate you.)

Odd remarks about race have also been a Steele motif. On *Face the Nation* in September, Bob Schieffer asked Steele about the news that President Obama had asked David Paterson, the unpopular Democratic governor of New York, not to run in 2010. "I found that to be stunning that the White House would send word to one of only two black governors in the country not to run for reelection." So far, no other Republicans have followed Steele's lead in trying to portray Obama as hostile to black politicians. After the November elections—when he could have been basking in the favorable publicity for the party and himself—Steele said on TV One that white Republicans have "been scared of me."

While they don't qualify as gaffes, Steele's awkward attempts to make the Republican party cool have also been painful to watch. He dismissed the stimulus as "bling bling." He relaunched the party's website, adding a blog of his own called "What Up?" It was quickly changed to "Steele's Blog."

On the bright side, each gaffe seems to diminish the impact of the next one. Steele does a lot of press (although it proved impossible to set up a NATIONAL REVIEW interview with him). Not many people are paying close attention to the stream of Steele's words, although liberal blogs seem to enjoy keeping tabs on him. "He's gone from being negative and controversial to being out of the discussion," says one Republican strategist, who like most of

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Steele's critics within his party requested anonymity.

It isn't only Steele's unhelpful comments that have earned him Republican enemies. Many of the party's D.C.-based consultants, pollsters, and strategists complain that a small group of Steele allies—chiefly Curt Anderson, his brother Wes, and Blaise Hazelwood—are getting the RNC's business, and that they have been cut out. "I am concerned about that," says Norcross.

Republican congressmen and their staffs, meanwhile, say that Steele makes too many policy pronouncements without consulting them first. Steele wrote an op-ed for the *Washington Post* pledging that Republicans would protect Medicare from cuts. A few Republicans thought that he was, however unintentionally, making it harder to reform the program in the future. Others thought that he was being politically ham-handed: Senior citizens were already upset about Obama's proposed cuts, so why give Obama the opportunity to brand the criticism as partisan? From Capitol Hill, the chief complaint was that Steele was intruding on elected officials' turf. This objection has been raised before, on issues where Steele is out of step with most Republicans. As RNC chairman, Steele promised to get a license plate on his car that signaled his support for full congressional voting representation for the District of Columbia.

The turf dispute points to a larger possible problem. Many Republicans look to Haley Barbour's chairmanship of the party in 1993 and 1994 as a model. Barbour was able to bring all the elements of the Republican coalition together and coordinate their political offensive against the Clinton administration: House Republicans, Senate Republicans, Republican governors, conservative organizations, and supportive interest groups. It is difficult for anyone other than the RNC chairman to play that role. But Steele does not enjoy sufficient confidence to fill it. Nor is it clear that he is interested in doing so. He does not send representatives to speak at Grover Norquist's meetings of conservative activists, as previous chairmen have done. He does not attend the monthly dinners of top Republican strategists, as every previous chairman of the past 25 years has done.

Steele's defenders say that his principal job is to raise money for Republican candidates and he is succeeding spectacularly at that task. The party has been awash in donations, mostly small ones and many of them from first-time donors. Republicans see these donations as a sign of grassroots enthusiasm for the party, or at least for resisting the Democrats. Republicans in Virginia and New Jersey had no complaints about lack of RNC support for their candidates for governor.

Steele's critics say that it's a change in the political tides, and not anything he has done, that has lifted donations. They argue that big-money donors aren't giving because they lack confidence in Steele. The Steele camp has a comeback to that criticism: The party is far out of power and thus can't give big donors any favors, and those donors thus have no incentive to give. That's essentially what Trevor Francis, Steele's communications director, says. The critics say that explanation is correct, but only up to a point: Some of these donors have been contributing to the Republicans' Senate campaign committee, run by Sen. John Cornyn of Texas.

Steele's defenders say that his principal job is to raise money for Republican candidates and he is succeeding spectacularly at that task.

But it is unlikely that Steele will lose his job. It's not just that the only objective measurements of his performance—fundraising and election results—favor him. The critics also have no consensus candidate to replace him. The new chairman would have the job only until the party's next presidential candidate installed his own person. So it would be hard to entice anyone to go through the effort.

One Republican insider speaks for many when he says that the party just has to make the best of it. "Can we really afford to run a guy out of town who's non-traditional in terms of race, or do you try to help?" he asks. "I get what the challenges are. As long as that building raises money and implements its programs, if he will restrain his tongue a bit we can get through this time." Good luck with that. **NR**

Overloaded And Sinking

How to make Medicaid even worse, the Obama way

BY DUNCAN CURRIE

In June 2005, after months of fierce debate over Social Security reform, the chairman of the National Governors Association (NGA) issued a sobering prediction. "Long before Social Security goes bankrupt," said Virginia Democrat Mark Warner, "Medicaid is going to bankrupt all the states." An exaggeration, perhaps, but the health-care legislation being mulled on Capitol Hill would make Warner's prediction more realistic.

According to the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), the bill passed by the House on November 7 would boost state Medicaid spending by a net total of $34 billion between 2010 and 2019. It would raise the Medicaid-eligibility threshold to 150 percent of the federal poverty line; force states to preserve their existing levels of Medicaid coverage through 2019 and also maintain current coverage levels among certain children enrolled in the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP); and require states to move some children from CHIP to Medicaid.

To help pay for this, the federal government would absorb, on average, 91 percent of the cost of insuring new state Medicaid enrollees who qualified for coverage under the 150 percent rule. By comparison, the average federal contribution to state Medicaid programs is typically around 57 percent. The feds pick up a bigger portion of the tab for CHIP (70 percent, on average), and the Pelosi bill would continue to reimburse states at CHIP rates for those children transferred from CHIP to Medicaid. By 2019, the CBO reports, the number of Medicaid beneficiaries would be 15 million greater than the combined number of Medicaid *and* CHIP recipients would be absent the legislation.

If that sounds mind-bendingly complicated, it is. But the upshot is that Pelosicare would significantly increase the burden on already unsustainable state

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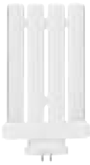

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Medicaid budgets. While federal subsidies would temporarily ease the blow, the net growth in state Medicaid expenditures from 2010 to 2019 would be enormous.

Pelosicare will have to be reconciled with whatever legislation the Senate produces. The bill designed by Senate Finance Committee chairman Max Baucus would lift the Medicaid-eligibility ceiling to 133 percent of the federal poverty line. The CBO reckons that Baucuscare would increase state Medicaid spending by $33 billion between 2010 and 2019.

According to a Heritage Foundation analysis, instituting the 133 percent threshold would enlarge individual state Medicaid populations by an average of 36.6 percent from June 2008 levels. The estimated jump would be 82.1 percent in Nevada, 80.7 percent in Montana, 76.9 percent in Texas, 70 percent in Colorado, 61.7 percent in Oregon, and 54 percent in Florida. California and New Jersey, two of the most fiscally ravaged states in America, would see their Medicaid populations swell by 34.2 percent and 47.1 percent respectively.

While the Medicaid issue has consumed far less political oxygen than Medicare cuts, tax hikes, and the "public option" have, it has caused heartburn among state governors, including Democrats. Tennessee's Phil Bredesen, for example, has complained that exacerbating state budget deficits "does not seem a very appropriate way" to extend health-insurance coverage. California's Arnold Schwarzenegger has protested that his state "cannot afford its current Medicaid program as structured and governed by federal rules."

In the Senate, meanwhile, several liberal Democrats are concerned that the proposed legislation would effectively penalize their home states for having already expanded Medicaid. In an October 22 letter to Baucus, Senate majority leader Harry Reid, and Senate Health Committee chairman Chris Dodd, 14 Democrats expressed frustration that tax dollars paid by their constituents would "go to states around the country that have consistently ignored the health care needs of their low-income residents without any acknowledgement of our original investment. That is unacceptable."

Amid this wrangling, it is worth reviewing Medicaid's original purpose and taking stock of its core deficiencies. Established in 1965 as a centerpiece of LBJ's Great Society, Medicaid was intended to provide health benefits for the needy. Over time, it has ballooned in size and cost, covering a growing segment of lower-income Americans. In fiscal year 2008, there were 62 million people (roughly one-fifth of the U.S. population) enrolled in Medicaid. According to the CBO, around half of them were poor children, and another quarter "were either the parents of those children or poor pregnant women."

The federal medical assistance percentage (FMAP) refers to the portion of state Medicaid costs paid by Washington; it varies from state to state based on income levels. The average FMAP is usually 57 percent, meaning that the average state is responsible for funding 43 percent of its own Medicaid program. However, as the CBO notes, the average federal share of Medicaid will hover around 67 percent through the beginning of fiscal year 2011, thanks to the economic-stimulus plan enacted last February. In fiscal year 2009, according to the Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured (KCMU), the FMAP for New Hampshire was just over 56 percent, while the FMAP for Mississippi was nearly 84 percent.

KCMU calculations show that the growth rate of total Medicaid spending in fiscal year 2009 was 7.9 percent, "a higher rate than the original projections and the highest rate of growth in six years." One would expect Medicaid rolls to mushroom during a nasty recession; the KCMU estimates that a spike of one percentage point in the unemployment rate yields a million new enrollees in Medicaid and CHIP. But the long-term explosion in state Medicaid spending has been driven primarily by the program's deep structural flaws.

For starters, the FMAP formula creates an unhealthy incentive for states to jack up their Medicaid expenditures. "It's perfectly designed to maximize fiscal irresponsibility," says Jim Frogue, vice president of the Center for Health Transformation (Newt Gingrich's health-policy think tank). If a state has an FMAP of 60 percent, every $1 it spends on Medicaid is matched by $1.50 from the feds. This arrangement has promoted profligacy and weakened accountability. As Cato Institute health-care expert Michael Cannon puts it, "Medicaid is like crack for governors and state officials."

Conservatives and libertarians have long advocated turning the program into a block grant—in other words, giving each state a fixed amount of federal Medicaid dollars accompanied by highly flexible spending guidelines. This would encourage states to curb fraud and inefficiencies. Cannon suggests that Medicaid block grants could be modeled on elements of the 1996 welfare-reform bill. On the down side, says Frogue, if block granting were based on present levels of Medicaid spending, wasteful states would be rewarded and prudent states punished.

So how *should* Washington decide the value of state Medicaid allocations? Under the current framework, a state’s FMAP is determined by its per capita income. American Enterprise Institute scholar Robert Helms, who served on the 2005–06 Medicaid Commission, argues that federal Medicaid allotments should instead be determined by factors such as a state’s poverty rate, its tax-raising capacity, and the size of its disabled and long-term-care populations. This type of modified formula could be used to calculate lump-sum block grants.

A 2005 NGA report contrasted the rigidity of Medicaid with the relative elasticity of CHIP. Most states offer a one-size-fits-all Medicaid benefits package, even though Medicaid recipients are a heterogeneous lot (young and old, healthy and sick). It would be far cheaper—and far more efficacious—to target Medicaid services to specific groups. The NGA report also recommended that Medicaid permit enhanced cost sharing. Under CHIP, it observed, “states have broad discretion to establish any form of premium, deductible, or co-pay for all populations, for all services.” But under Medicaid, such cost-sharing mechanisms have been severely restricted.

The Deficit Reduction Act signed by Pres. George W. Bush in February 2006 helped mitigate these problems by affording states more latitude to revamp their Medicaid programs. In response, Kentucky began offering four distinct Medicaid plans: “Global Choices” (for the general population), “Family Choices” (for children), “Optimum Choices” (for disabled adults), and “Comprehensive Choices” (for those requiring nursing-facility-level care). Idaho carved out three separate recipient categories—low-income children and adults, the disabled and those with special needs, and elderly “dual eligibles” (who qualify for both Medicaid and Medicare)—and established three corresponding benefit packages. West Virginia introduced a “basic” plan and an “enhanced” plan; to participate in the latter, recipients must sign a member agreement and fulfill various obligations.

In South Carolina, Gov. Mark Sanford pushed for a more radical overhaul: He wanted to implement Medicaid health-savings accounts (HSAs) that could be spent on private insurance. This proposal died well before Sanford’s sex scandal erupted. It was even more ambitious than the Medicaid-privatization initiative Jeb Bush launched during his tenure as governor of Florida. The Bush program, now operating in certain pilot counties, essentially voucherizes Medicaid and lets beneficiaries purchase insurance from managed-care companies. Those beneficiaries can also decline Medicaid coverage and obtain a government subsidy to offset the cost of buying private insurance. A preliminary University of Florida study reckons that “Medicaid expenditures in Broward and Duval Counties were lower on a per member per month . . . basis during the first two years post Reform than would have been the case in the absence of the demonstration project.”

Given how many doctors refuse to accept Medicaid patients (owing to low physician-payment rates), the fundamental goal of Medicaid reform should be to assist the genuinely needy while encouraging those with sufficient resources to exit the program and acquire private insurance. In the short run, Medicaid HSAs and vouchers would certainly help enrollees—but they could also have unintended consequences. As Cannon points out, they could increase Medicaid-participation rates, drive up costs, discourage recipients from leaving the program, and intensify their long-term dependence on government-sponsored health benefits.

On the other hand, until more states experiment with Medicaid HSAs and vouchers, we won’t be able to evaluate their full impact. Unfortunately, Pelosicare would reduce states’ ability to craft more flexible and innovative Medicaid policies. In its current form, the program is grossly inefficient and patently unsustainable. Its present trajectory will lead to fiscal ruin. As Governor Bredesen told the *New York Times* in July, “It’s not health-care reform to dump more money into Medicaid.” Too many Democrats are pretending otherwise. **NR**

‘It’s Like a Budget Number’

‘Stimulus’ that isn’t; ‘jobs’ that aren’t

BY STEPHEN SPRUIELL

‘The very first law in advertising,” one critic of the $787 billion stimulus bill wrote, “is to avoid the concrete promise and cultivate the delightfully vague.” In selling that bill, Obama claimed that it would “save or create” (delightfully vague!) some 3 million jobs (dreadfully concrete). The trouble with the concrete is that sooner or later somebody will check it out. Newspapers across the country have started looking into the administration’s jobs claims, producing the following headlines:

- “Stimulus Job Boost in State Exaggerated, Review Finds”—the *Boston Globe*
- “Not All Jobs ‘Saved’ by Stimulus Were in Danger”—the *Columbus Dispatch*
- “Many California Jobs ‘Saved’ by Stimulus Funds Weren’t in Jeopardy”—the *Sacramento Bee*
- “Stimulus-Jobs Count in Colorado Overinflated”—the *Denver Post*
- “Fewer Local Jobs Saved by Federal Stimulus Than Reported”—the *News Tribune* (Tacoma, Wash.)
- “Illinois Data on Stimulus-Related Jobs Saved, Created Don’t Add Up”—the *Chicago Tribune*

Ouch. To its credit, the press is checking the administration’s math, debunking claims that the stimulus has created or saved approximately 650,000 jobs so far. It turns out that state and federal officials reached that number by counting raises as “jobs created” and positions that would not have been eliminated as “jobs saved.” Officials have also reported that the stimulus saved jobs in places like Arizona’s 15th congressional district, which doesn’t exist. And even if one were to take the administration at its word, dividing the number of stimulus dollars spent so far by the number of jobs saved or created yields a cost of $160,000 per job.

This is important work insofar as it demonstrates the inability of the government to spend efficiently or wisely. But it leaves a larger question unanswered: Has the stimulus created any jobs at all?

Stimulus backers, who tend to be followers of the economist John Maynard Keynes, would say that the important thing is that the government is spending money on something—*anything*. Keynes argued that recessions are caused by failures of aggregate demand that can be counteracted only with massive increases in government spending. Keynes famously wrote that even paying people to bury jars of money would be better than no government action at all. (Keynes said that this plan would have an additional benefit: The private sector would employ people to find the jars and dig them up.)

That example sounds ridiculous, but the theory that economic cycles are driven by aggregate demand holds an enormous intuitive appeal. "It takes a very complicated problem and gives it a simple solution," says Bradford Cornell, a visiting professor of financial economics at the California Institute of Technology. Refuting the theory with empirical evidence has always been difficult, he explains, because it is impossible to hold everything in an economy constant. In other words, Keynesians will always be able to argue that things would have been worse if the government hadn't acted.

So Cornell redefined the problem. It is a mistake to understand recessions in terms of aggregates, he argued in a recent paper. The correct view is to think of the economy as a giant telephone switchboard, through which resources are connected with demand for them. A sudden spike in the price of housing, for instance, is like a blinking light on the switchboard, signaling construction companies to build more houses, banks to make more mortgage loans, etc. Recessions occur when conditions suddenly change, and resources are no longer properly matched to consumer desires. "Viewed from a matching perspective there is no failure of 'aggregate demand'—whatever that means," Cornell wrote. "Instead, there is a complex misalignment problem which results in a decline in overall output."

The idea that recessions are matching problems is not new—economists Fischer Black and Friedrich Hayek explored it—and Cornell says he's been thinking about the concept since 1969. He was trying to write a book on student unrest behind the Iron Curtain, but lacked the travel money to research it. "I stopped in West Berlin and bought about 20 pairs of blue jeans," he says. Blue jeans were in incredibly high demand in Eastern Europe, where Communist central planners had surfeited the populace with ugly flannel slacks. "One pair of blue jeans could pay for an entire weekend in Warsaw," he says, "because the Russians did a terrible job of matching."

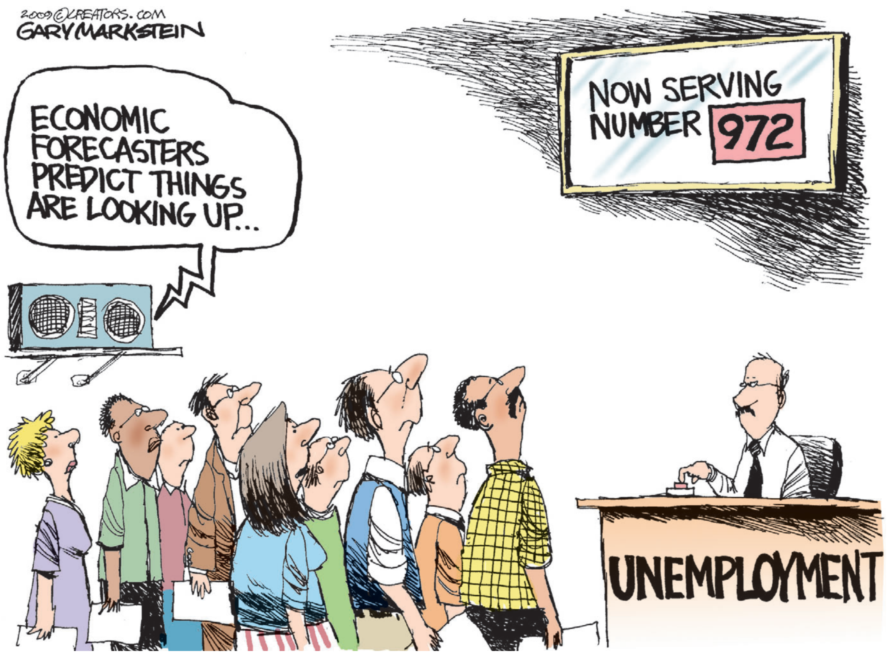
All governments, not just Communist ones, are notoriously bad at solving matching problems. In "The Use of Knowledge in Society," Hayek argued that central planners would never have enough information to guide resources where they are most urgently needed in an economy. Hayek emphasized the importance of prices in matching resources to economic desires. Cornell has refined our understanding of the problem by looking at the central role of personal plans, relationships, and contracts. Something like the housing bubble, he explains, can distort all three. People made long-term decisions based on the expectation that housing prices would continue to rise.

The resulting realignment is likely to be lengthy and costly, and just throwing money at the problem, *pace* Keynes and his followers, is not going to solve it. There are good reasons to believe it could make things worse. Government has neither the incentives nor the information to allocate economic resources efficiently.

So where is all the money going? The answers to this question have proved useful in demonstrating that the Obama administration's promises to "save or create" jobs were largely empty. For example: The Associated Press investigated claims that extra funding in the stimulus bill for the Head Start early-education program created or saved 14,506 jobs. One nonprofit in Georgia used the money to give its employees raises, then multiplied its total number of employees (508) by the percentage of the raises (1.84) and told the White House that the stimulus had saved 935 jobs. (Its directors said they were just following instructions they received from the White House.) Other nonprofits did the same. The AP concluded that the number of jobs reported to be "created" by the Head Start funds was at least three times what it should have been.

Going west, the *Sacramento Bee* wrote that "up to one-fourth of the 110,000 jobs reported as saved by federal stimulus money in California probably never were in danger." The California State University system claimed that stimulus funds had allowed it to retain 26,156 employees. That's more than half of CSU's total workforce. Laying off this many employees would have shut the system down, which a CSU spokesman admitted was never a real possibility. "This is not really a real number of people," she told the *Bee*. "It's like a budget number."

Other newspapers reported the same thing happening in their states. The fraudulent reporting stems from the fungibility of the $50 billion bailout for broke state governments included in the stimulus bill. States used the money to plug holes in their education budgets while claiming that it prevented mass layoffs of teachers. It is more likely that, instead of firing teachers, states like California and New York would have been forced to undertake long-overdue belt-tightening in other areas.



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Careful readers will catch the "other areas" and think that perhaps I am executing a dodge, for it raises the question of whether that belt-tightening would have eventually resulted in layoffs somewhere down the line. The answer is, Yes: The economy is constantly creating and shedding jobs, and it is possible that state governments, like most employers in a recession, might have found some downsizing necessary. But the money we've spent to prevent that downsizing had to come from somewhere, and, in that sense, the case for the stimulus is premised on a much bigger dodge: the fiction that the government can tax and borrow without dampening job creation in the private sector.

Keynesians argue that there is no crowding-out effect. Without the stimulus, they say, all that money would be sitting on the sidelines. Eugene Fama, a noted professor of finance at the University of Chicago, takes issue with that. "Give me an example of something that sat on the sidelines," he says. Earlier this year, Fama wrote a blog post in which he argued that, even in a financial crisis, the private sector is capable of deploying $787 billion more productively than the government could. That is because people do not just bury their money in jars. They make investments—or they deposit their money in banks, and the banks invest it—and these investments create jobs.

Fama's critics countered that recessions lead to unproductive investments, such as unwanted growth in inventories. But Fama pointed out that inventory growth in 2008 was tiny—$47 billion—relative to the size of the stimulus. Furthermore, Fama says, "even that is not so unproductive. Suppose the inventory got thrown away. . . . The people who generated the inventory still got income." Tossing out inventory is an unproductive use of resources, to be sure, but so are many of the stimulus projects that keep popping up in the news. This summer, the *Ledger* of Lakeland, Fla., reported that the stimulus was funding the construction of a $3.4 million "eco-passage" enabling turtles to cross safely beneath a state highway. We might as well have paid ten people $40,000 each to bury $3 million in a jar.

Even in the face of all this negative press, some stimulus supporters persist. What we need now, they say, is a second, "smarter" stimulus package, with an extra focus on creating and saving jobs. Cornell, the Caltech economist, says he's heard it all before. "Sure," he says, "that's what Leo Brezhnev needed: a smarter social stimulus package." **NR**

Rise of an Epithet

'Teabagger' and what to do

BY JAY NORDLINGER

To "teabag" or not to "teabag": That is not the most pressing question of these times, but it is a question to consider. Routinely, conservative protesters in the "tea party" movement are called "teabaggers," and those calling them that do not mean it in a nice way. Many conservatives are mulling what to do about this term: fight it, embrace it, what?

First, a little history. After Barack Obama was sworn in as president, with his big majorities in Congress, the Democrats launched quite a bit of federal spending: particularly with the "stimulus" package. Some Americans were determined to counter this. And, before you knew it, we had the "tea party" movement. What protesters were doing, of course, was invoking the spirit of the American Revolutionaries, and their Boston Tea Party. According to the website of the Tea Party Patriots, the movement is committed to three "core values": fiscal responsibility, constitutionally limited government, and free markets.

The first big day for this movement was Tax Day, April 15. And organizers had a gimmick. They asked people to send a tea bag to the Oval Office. One of the exhortations was "Tea Bag the Fools in D.C." A protester was spotted with a sign saying, "Tea Bag the Liberal Dems Before They Tea Bag You." So, conservatives started it: started with this terminology. But others ran with it and ran with it.

I have no doubt you are sexually hip, but just in case you're not, please know that "teabag" has a particular meaning in certain circles. In order to have a discussion of our general topic, we must be aware of that meaning, and I call on the Source of All Knowledge, Wikipedia: "'Teabagging' is a slang term for the act of a man placing his scrotum in the mouth or on or around the face (including the top of the head) of another person, often in a repeated in-and-out motion as in *irrumatio*. The practice resembles dipping a tea bag into a cup of tea." I could quote you more, but you have had enough.

The liberal media, to use a convenient tag, went after the protesters with glee. Take Anderson Cooper, the acclaimed anchorman for CNN. He was interviewing David Gergen, the political pundit. And Gergen was saying that, after two very bad elections, conservatives and Republicans were "searching for their voice." Cooper responded, "It's hard to talk when you're teabagging." He said this with a smirk.

MSNBC had an outright field day. Rachel Maddow and a guest of hers, Ana Marie Cox, made teabag jokes to each other for minutes on end: having great, chortling fun at the conservatives' expense. And here is the performance of another host, David Shuster:

"For most Americans, Wednesday, April 15, will be Tax Day, but . . . it's going to be Teabagging Day for the right wing, and they're going nuts for it. Thousands of them whipped out the festivities early this past weekend, and while the parties are officially toothless, the teabaggers are full-throated about their goals. They want to give President Obama a strong tongue-lashing and lick government spending."

Shuster went on to say that Fox News personalities were "looking forward to an up-close-and-personal taste of teabagging." Etc., etc. All the while, MSNBC was picturing Republican figures, and the following words were on the screen: "TEABAG MOUTHPIECES."

Ma and Pa America may not have been in on the joke, but plenty of other people were. On HBO, the lefty comedian Bill Maher commented, "When the year started, 'teabagging' was a phrase that referred to dangling one's testicles in someone else's face." And the tea-party protesters "managed to turn it into something gross and ridiculous." Tuh-dum.

After Cooper and the others smirked about "teabagging," the word went utterly mainstream—although you could say that, if Cooper used it, it started mainstream: because how much more mainstream can you get than a CNN anchor? On ABC's *This Week with George Stephanopoulos*, E. J. Dionne, the liberal columnist, spoke of "a right-wing candidate supported by the teabaggers." The

“Biographies good enough for movie material.”

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Contained in the pages of this book by Young America’s Foundation’s Nicole Hoplin and Ron Robinson are the stories that have rarely been told by the media. They are the stories of the vibrant lives of people who stood behind some of the Conservative Movement’s brightest moments and who received little recognition or gratitude from the Movement or the country they shaped over the years. More importantly, they are stories of how the most significant books, institutions, and leaders came to be.

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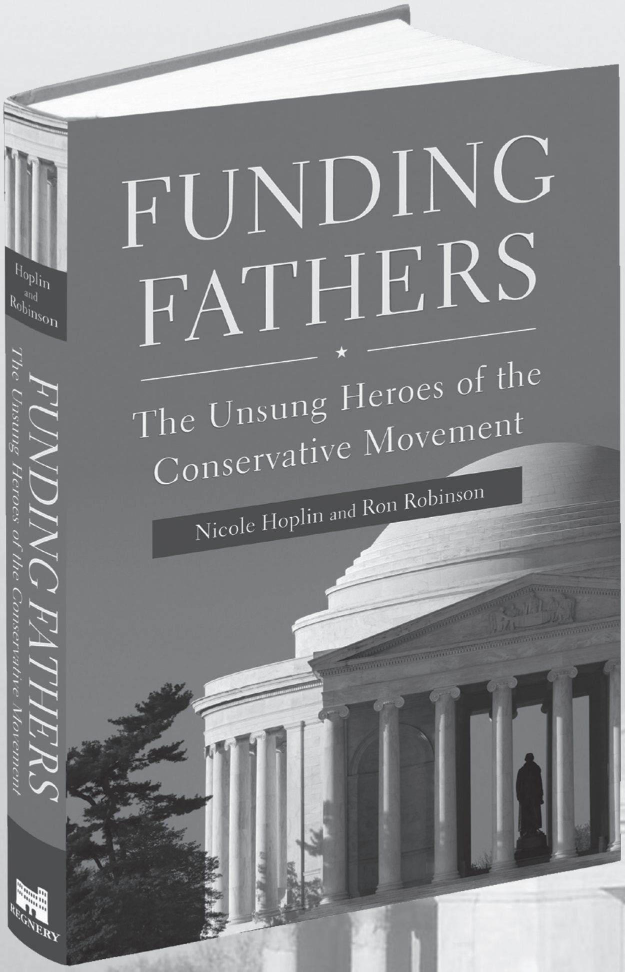
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host himself, Stephanopoulos, followed suit. On PBS's *NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*, senior correspondent Gwen Ifill used "teabaggers" as well. At the *New York Times*, Paul Krugman used it in a column. Elsewhere, Roger Ebert used it in a movie review. And so on.

Some politicians—Democrats—have talked about "teabagging" and "teabaggers" too. And that includes the biggest Democratic politicians of them all. Recently, both President Obama and former president Bill Clinton spoke to congressional Democrats behind closed doors. They were giving pep talks on health-care legislation. Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse reported Clinton as saying, "The reason the teabaggers are so inflamed is because we are winning." Rep. Earl Blumenauer reported Obama as saying, "Does anybody think that the teabag, anti-government people are going to support them if they bring down health care?"

Some on the right are using 'teabagger,' but mainly the word is a putdown from the left. Conservatives realize that nothing friendly is meant by it. You can tell by tone and context . . .

It will be interesting to see whether the president—or Bill Clinton, for that matter—ever uses "teabag" and the like in public. And if not, why not?

Some on the right are using "teabagger," but mainly the word is a putdown from the left. Conservatives realize that nothing friendly is meant by it. You can tell by tone and context, for one thing. (Or is that two things?) Of course, some people use "teabagger" in innocence—unaware of any vulgar connotation. One such person is, or was, Gwen Ifill. Some of her *NewsHour* viewers wrote to complain. And Ifill later said, "Turns out I am the only person with access to email who never knew this was a term with a sexual meaning. I used it in an offhand manner as a shorthand referring to the 'tea party' movement. It was a slip I was unaware of, and I regret it."

Now to the question of what to do. How should conservatives handle this matter? Should we challenge the language, let it slide, adopt it? Many conservatives—most, I would say—are of a mind to fight. According to this point of view, people who use "teabagger" and such should be called on it, especially if they smirk. "What do you mean by that?" one might ask. "What do you mean by 'teabagger,' and why do you smirk?" In other words, conservatives want to introduce a little shame. And the responses of liberals could be kind of interesting.

I myself have enjoyed "calling out" opponents in debate—not on "teabagger" (no opportunity yet), but on other words. "Neocon," for example. "What do you mean by 'neocon'?" I'll say. "What's a 'neocon'?" Also "Zionist": "What do you mean by 'Zionist'? What's a Zionist, in your mind?" These words have real meanings, but often people don't know them. They just mean them as putdowns.

Some conservatives are happy to embrace "teabagger," or are at least willing to do so. They are "owning the insult," which is to say, taking what is intended as a slur and wearing it proudly. There are many words and names in our vocabulary that started out as slurs and became something else. Several of these words and names are found in religion—"Christian," for example. According to a Bible dictionary, this was "the name given by the Greeks or Romans, probably in reproach, to the followers of Jesus." Soon enough, it "was universally accepted." "Jesuit" had a defamatory beginning. Same with "Methodist," "Unitarian," "Quaker," and "Shaker." (You can sort of tell with those last two, can't you?)

We have had this phenomenon in politics, too. "Tory" and "Whig" were putdowns when they originated, and so was "neoconservative." (All things are new again, I guess.) "Yankee Doodle" was none too nice. That second word probably relates to the male organ. In the world of art, "Impressionist" was a putdown directed at those who painted rather gauzily or suggestively, rather than accurately. But no one today would consider Monet defamed if called an Impressionist.

What about a special case—the worst word in American English, as some of us see it, namely the N-word? When I was growing up, in Ann Arbor, Mich., there was a little debate: Should school officials try to prevent black students from using the N-word? I don't believe the issue was ever settled. And this brings up the question of whether "teabagger" could be kind of a conservative N-word: to be used in the family, but radioactive outside the family.

We grant that one can always look at things too literally, or too etymologically. In 1998, a major Clinton foe, Rep. Dan Burton (R., Ind.), called the president a "scumbag." The same year, Sen. Al D'Amato (R., N.Y.), running for reelection, called his opponent—Rep. Charles Schumer—a "putzhead." Many in the media were careful to explain to people that Burton had called Clinton a "used condom," and that D'Amato, borrowing from Yiddish, had called Schumer a "penis head." (Always with the penis.) But did Burton and D'Amato mean those words in quite those senses?

In any event, it may well be too late to purge "teabagger" from our discourse, certainly from discourse controlled by liberals. But I'm for giving it a try: for running "teabagger" out of town, even at this late date. It is really a lowdown term. "Tea partier" is a neutral term. "Tea-party patriots" is a positive term, used by some of the protesters themselves. "Teabagger"—not so positive, and not so neutral.

It could well be that liberals at large are recognizing this too. In a discussion at *Slate*, the online magazine, Sam Tanenhaus wrote, "Even today the right insists it is driven by ideas, even if the leading thinkers are now Limbaugh and Beck, and the shock troops are tea-baggers and anti-tax demonstrators." As he told me, he subsequently learned that "teabagger" had this vulgar meaning, and was used as a pejorative. So he changed his text to "tea-partiers": "tea-partiers and anti-tax demonstrators." Much better, don't you think? **NR**

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Domestic terrorism is not the end of the Islamists' American project

BY ALEX ALEXIEV

As we struggle to come to terms with the Fort Hood massacre, the first thing to do—if we want to prevent such terrorism from becoming a regular event—is to understand why it happened and who or what is to blame for it. Despite the mainstream media's efforts to present Fort Hood as an unfortunate episode of random violence—a crazed gunman just happened to shout "Allahu akbar!"—there was nothing random about it. Rather, it was the preordained, indeed inevitable, outcome of the cancerous growth of radical Islam in America. Nor is Major Hasan's transformation into a jihadist willing to murder his fellow citizens an isolated case. In the last six months alone, at least 20 homegrown Muslim extremists were arrested by the FBI for planning terrorist attacks in Colorado, Detroit, New York City, Dallas, and Newburgh, N.Y. Like Major Hasan, who was radicalized in Islamist mosques in Falls Church, Va., and Silver Spring, Md., these American Muslims embraced terrorism upon being radicalized by American imams and mosques.

So we must begin by trying to understand what radical Islam is, what it's not, and how it turns American-born Muslims into jihadist time bombs. The problem is not simply that in radical Islam this country faces a well-entrenched domestic enemy, but that the current administration, like the three that preceded it, has not shown any sign of understanding this reality, let alone a willingness to confront it.

Simply put, radical Islam, though operating under the guise of religion and claiming to work in religion's behalf, is less a religious movement than a revolutionary ideology akin to 20th-century totalitarian creeds like Nazism and Communism. It seeks religious legitimacy by embracing violent, reactionary, and obscurantist sharia doctrine—along with extremist interpretations of Islam, such as Wahhabism and Salafism—but it is quintessentially totalitarian in that it denies the legitimacy of Western civilization and the secular democratic order; these it considers to be *jahiliyya*—"barbarism"—in the words of the patron saint of Islamism, Sayyid Qutb. What is new in the Islamists' presentation of the West as the implacable enemy of Islam is the framing of Islam's conflict with it in apocalyptic, Manichean terms. The result is the demonization of the West as a subhuman civilization that must be destroyed if Islam is to survive and triumph. This demonization is coupled with the outright rejection of the possibility of peaceful coexistence between Islam and any other religion or ideology in the long term. Here it is important to note that radical Islam sees itself as

Mr. Alexiev is is a visiting fellow at the Hudson Institute in Washington, D.C.

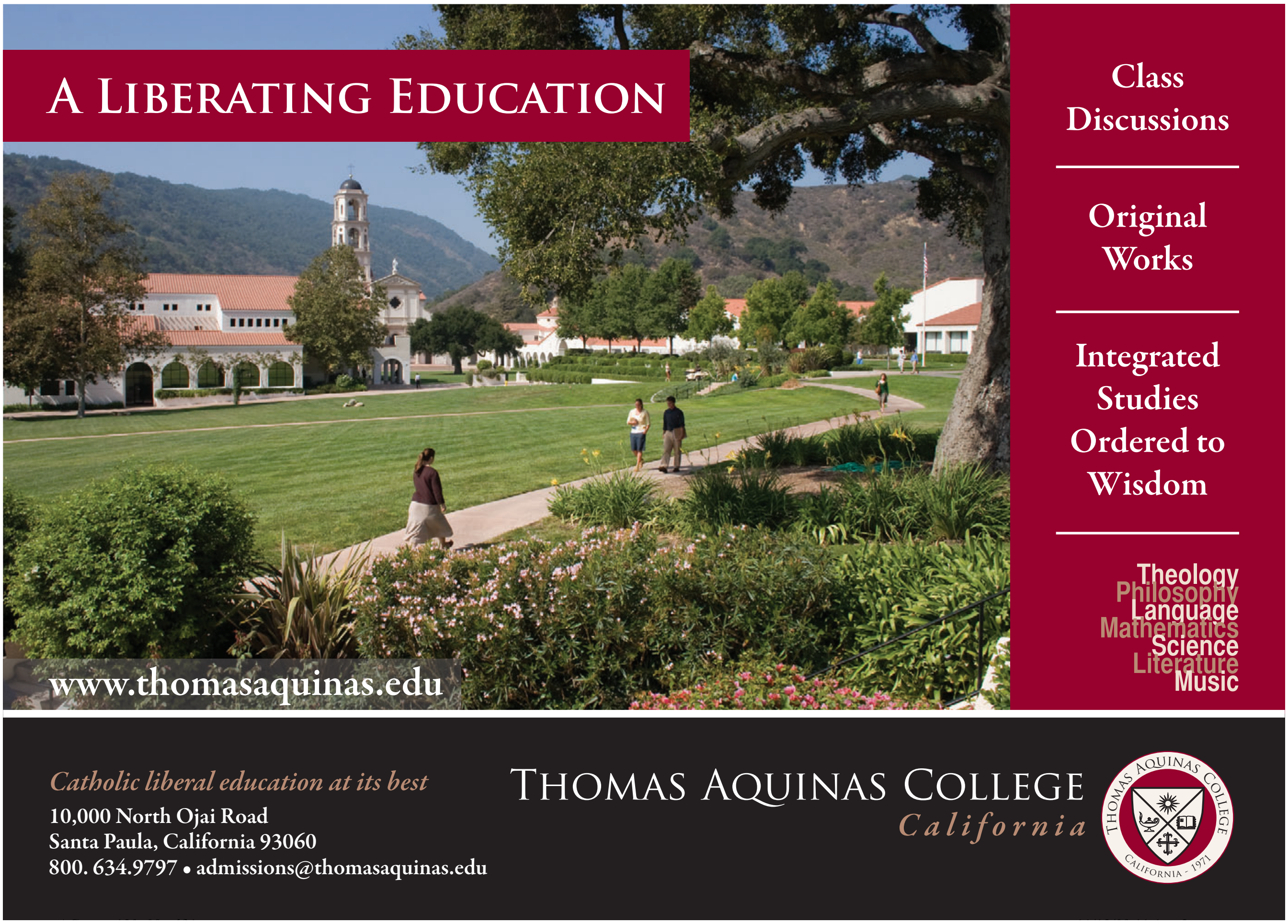
the perfect, God-ordained fusion of state and religion (*din wa dawla*) and, therefore, non-religious doctrines such as nationalism, socialism, and capitalism are seen as threats equal to those presented by other religions.

Like its erstwhile totalitarian confreres, radical Islam advocates a millenarian utopia—to take the form, in this case, of worldwide Muslim rule by the "Caliphate." Interestingly, the concept of the Caliphate is nowhere to be found in either the Koran or the Sunna; it bears more resemblance to the perfected societies dreamed of by Western dictators. Another concept borrowed by Islamism from European totalitarianism is the Leninist doctrine of the vanguard party. Much like Lenin vis-à-vis the proletariat, Sayyid Qutb (1906–1966), who first applied Lenin's vanguard theory to radical Islam, did not put much stock in the revolutionary potential of the Muslim masses. He believed that a small core of professional Islamic revolutionaries was essential to the success of the Islamist movement. Qutb's Islamist-vanguard theory, as further developed by today's leading Islamist ideologue, Yusuf al-Qaradawi, is a key to understanding the role of Muslim Brotherhood activists and affiliated organizations in making radical Islam the dominant idiom of the Muslim establishment in America.

And it is impossible to grasp Islamist ideology without understanding that Islamic extremists consider Muslims who do not share their radical views no less the enemy than the infidels. The practice of declaring a practicing Muslim who does not agree with you an apostate (*takfir*) was first propounded by the founder of Wahhabism, Abd al-Wahhab, in the 18th century, but it was Sayyid Qutb who developed the theory of a "Muslim *jahiliyya*" and proclaimed that Muslim rulers and societies that have not imposed sharia rule are apostates to be treated accordingly. This not only stands the Koran on its head but is largely responsible for the fact that the vast majority of the victims of Islamic violence in the past decades have been other Muslims—a fact whose continuing truth is lamentably demonstrated, on a daily basis, by the Taliban.

Islamists believe that to achieve their objectives they must first destroy Western civilization—beginning with the United States, its most powerful protector. This does not mean that violence is always the first resort. Violence is invariably seen as an essential instrument in the Islamist arsenal, but, in the current state of Islamic weakness and American strength, the preferred tactics are proselytism, indoctrination, infiltration, and undermining American society from within. Islamists seek to destroy the West "with their [i.e., the West's] own hands," as one Muslim Brotherhood document put it—which is to say, by exploiting the rights and freedoms our democratic system guarantees.

It is important to keep in mind that while terrorism is the inevitable outcome of Islamic extremism in America, it is not the primary objective—or even a very important objective—of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the organized Islamist networks insinuated into our society. Terrorism takes place, and will continue to take place, because individuals who have been indoctrinated by radical imams to hate their country and compatriots as the very incarnation of evil will often take things into their own hands. But for the leaders and ideologues of radical Islam, domestic terrorism could prove tactically counterproductive to the achievement of their larger objectives; they do not, as rule, encourage it explicitly.

This is not to say that leading U.S. Islamists and Islamist organizations disapprove of violence or suicide terrorism at all. On the contrary, most of them wholeheartedly support virtually all overseas terrorist groups, such as Hamas and the Taliban, both morally and financially, as testified to by the large number of American Islamists already sitting in jail. To judge the role of radical Islam in America on the basis of whether it is involved in direct support for domestic terrorism is to dramatically underestimate a vastly greater threat this fifth column represents to our security. Terrorism is only a symptom of the underlying malignancy of Islamic extremism, and to deal with it while ignoring the malignancy is akin to fighting cancer by alleviating the pain it causes.

ARMED with their radical ideology and amply endowed with Saudi funds, committed cadres of professional revolutionaries from the Muslim Brotherhood descended on America in the early 1960s and, as they did throughout the West, began to build an infrastructure for radical Islam, starting with the Muslim Students Association (MSA) in 1963. In short order, a great number of Islamist organizations, professional associations, youth groups, publishing houses, and charities were spun off from this "student" association, allowing it to boast that, under its auspices, "nearly every other major Muslim organization (in America) was formed." Their formation was anything but haphazard. They were conceived as integral parts of a larger network designed to serve a clearly defined purpose. The Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), for example, was envisioned as an umbrella organization that would become the "nucleus for the Islamic Movement in North America." The North American Islamic Trust (NAIT) was vested with control of Wahhabi-funded institutions, while the Islamic Circle of North America was designed to be the primary outreach agency for Subcontinental Muslims, with Urdu its official language.

The network has expanded greatly since then, with the MSA alone boasting 1,000 chapters in North America. ISNA and NAIT directly control many hundreds of mosques. Each of these groups is part of the same radical-Islamic construct. What all have in common, apart from their common roots and the ideology they share, is their persistent claim to be independent and mainstream representatives of American Muslims, a claim that is all too often accepted uncritically by government institutions and even law-enforcement agencies. And while all these groups routinely deny having sympathy for or ties to radical Islam, they don't go out of their way to hide their true beliefs or their intimate ties to other members of the network. This is evident in their identical policy positions, their close and synergistic cooperation, and their vehement opposition to all U.S. policies seen as detrimental to Islamist objectives. It is especially evident in the network of interlocking directorships that links their close-knit leaders (or "vanguard," in Qutb's terms)—a network that leaves no doubt that they are indeed one and the same organization.

They also share a source of funding. It is impossible to understand the explosive growth of these radical networks—in both the U.S. and Europe, at a time when Muslim populations were still relatively small—without considering the role of Saudi money. Flush with cash after the 1973 oil embargo, which resulted in a nearly hundredfold increase in the kingdom's oil revenues over the following ten years, the Saudis dramatically boosted their financial support for radical Islam worldwide, especially in the West. According to Saudi government figures, Riyadh provided $48 billion to support Islamic activities abroad between 1975 and 1987, or some $4 billion per annum. All in all, these figures show that in the period between 1973 and 2002, Saudi Arabia spent more than $80 billion to promote Islamic activities in the non-Muslim world alone. This truly colossal sum has built a huge network of radical Wahhabi-controlled institutions, including more than 1,500 mosques, 150 Islamic centers, 202 Muslim colleges, and 2,000 Islamic schools—all of these in non-Muslim countries. As a result, there is hardly a city of any size in America or Europe today that does not have a Saudi-controlled institution preaching extremism and spewing hatred against Western civilization, directly or indirectly advocating its destruction.

IN practical terms, the Islamist networks in America have focused their efforts on several areas and produced results that, taken together, account for much of the radicalization of American Islam over the last three decades. These efforts included imposing their ideology on American Islam, taking over moderate Muslim institutions, radicalizing mainstream believers, indoctrinating the young, aggressively proselytizing among the infidels, infiltrating government institutions and the political establishment, and organizing support for extremist causes and jihad overseas.

In many of these areas, the Islamists have been hugely successful. On the issue of ideological penetration, Hudson Institute scholars Nina Shea and Paul Marshall have documented the universal spread of Wahhabi/Salafist ideology and literature in American mosques. Here are a few examples of the kind of religious wisdom they found disseminated:

- "Democracy is an evil system" and the "very embodiment of unbelief," so Muslims must reject it.
- Interfaith dialogue is a "sinful call" because it "breaks down the wall of resentment between Muslims and unbelievers."
- Freedom of religion is forbidden because "it allows denial of Islam." Accepting any religion other than Islam makes you "an apostate, and you should be killed because you have denied the Koran."
- "Believers must hate [the infidels] for their religion . . . and always oppose them in every way according to Islamic law."
- "Whoever believes that Christians and Jews worship God is an infidel."
- "Innovative" imams are "heretics and their prayers are invalid."
- "Muslims must be protected from the barbarian culture of Europe."

Indoctrination (known as *tarbiya*) in Islamist ideology has been a main concern of radical groups. They seek to spread

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their ideas across all levels of Muslim society, with a special emphasis on children and youth. Today, unbeknownst to the vast majority of Americans, there are schools in the United States that start their morning Pledge of Allegiance with "I pledge allegiance to Allah and his Prophet."

The proselytistic effort to convert the infidels to Islam, known as *dawah* in Islamic jargon, is an important enterprise for the radical networks, and special *dawah* departments exist in virtually all Islamist organizations. Proselytizing campaigns are far from random; some social groups are deemed more responsive to the Islamist message than others and accordingly subjected to special attention. They tend to be groups seen as aggrieved and alienated from society, such as minorities and prison inmates. Black Americans became an early focus and were considered especially promising. Two subgroups of the black population were targeted in particular: those in the penitentiary system, and members of the Nation of Islam. Reliable figures about the success of this campaign are difficult to obtain, but circumstantial evidence seems to point to significant progress of *dawah* efforts among blacks. Prison officials, for instance, estimated in the mid-1990s that between 10 and 20 percent of the nation's 1.5 million inmates—who are disproportionately black—identified themselves as Muslims, and some 30,000 black Americans were reported to convert to Islam in prison every year.

Last and most disturbing, radical Islam has without a doubt made significant inroads in its quest to infiltrate our government and institutions. Consider the case of Abdurahman Alamoudi, which is typical of the Islamist modus operandi. In October 2004 he was sentenced to 23 years in prison for terrorism-related activities, and he is currently in a federal penitentiary. Prior to that, he had been a kingpin of the Islamist network: He was a top official in a dozen major Islamist organizations and in five charities suspected of funding terrorism. Despite that, he evidently enjoyed unimpeded access to the White House under Presidents Clinton and Bush (43). He also served as a State Department "goodwill ambassador" in the Middle East and as a U.S. Information Agency speaker abroad. Most important, he founded an organization called the American Muslim Armed Forces and Veterans Affairs Council and established it as the exclusive authority for endorsing Muslim chaplains in all branches of the U.S. armed forces, enabling it to place extremists in the military virtually at will.

It was within this vast subversive enterprise that Major Hasan, like thousands of others, became radicalized—long before the war in Iraq came along. It is not difficult to trace his transformation into a mass murderer by simply looking at the institutions in which he was indoctrinated: First, Dar al-Hijrah in Falls Church, Va., one of the largest and most radical mosques in the country, where his mentor was Imam Anwar al-Aulaqi, an American-born advocate of jihad and suicide bombing; then the Muslim Community Center in Silver Spring, Md., under Imam Faizul Khan, another Muslim extremist, an influential figure in the Washington Islamist scene and an official at both the Islamic Society of North America (an unindicted co-conspirator in a terror-finance trial) and the Saudi-backed Muslim World League.

This troubling picture will surely get worse unless the U.S. government, at long last, decides to take a close look inside radical Islam within the United States. **NR**

ENERGY Tea

The power of the resurgent conservative populism

BY JEFFREY BELL

For conservatives, the populist question is front and center once again.

It began last year with divergent reactions among conservative elites to John McCain's selection of Sarah Palin as his running mate. That controversy continued beyond the defeat of the McCain-Palin ticket and is far from over today; it has branched out into a debate over Glenn Beck, Rush Limbaugh, other conservative cable and radio hosts, and the town-hall/tea-party phenomenon of vigorous pushback against President Obama and his policies. Is the negative, take-no-prisoners style of the conservative talkers and tea-partiers gratifying in the short run but fatal to the prospect of a conservative comeback in the medium and long run?

So far, the movement has had some success in turning the country against Obama's health-care agenda. A national Quinnipiac survey taken in late September and early October, for example, finds voters opposed to Obama's plan by a margin of 47 to 40 percent. While the president has an overall job approval/disapproval rating of 50/41 percent, 51 percent of voters disapprove of his handling of health care, with only 41 percent approving.

Yet while some Republican members of Congress helped the tea-partiers bring down Obama's support, the GOP has gained very little in overall public esteem—on this issue or any other. According to Quinnipiac, voters still trust Obama more than Republicans on health care by a 47–31 margin, and overall they disapprove of Republicans by a margin of 53 to 25 percent. (Quinnipiac's findings are representative of recent polling, including polls taken since the GOP's gubernatorial victories on November 3.) It's true that Republicans have been running close to even in polling for the 2010 congressional elections, but mainly because considerable numbers of voters have soured on Obama and the Democrats—and not because the electorate has concluded that Republicans offer superior policy ideas or the prospect of a more efficient federal government.

At the same time, town-hall conservatives have demonstrated that the United States is still a center-right country. Around the time of the inauguration, it seemed plausible that Obama's presidential honeymoon would last long enough for him to win broad public acceptance of a historic move to the left on many

Mr. Bell, a visiting fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington, is the author of Populism and Elitism: Politics in the Age of Equality.

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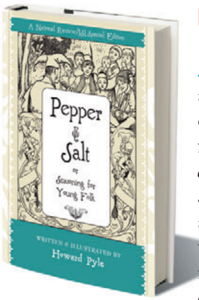

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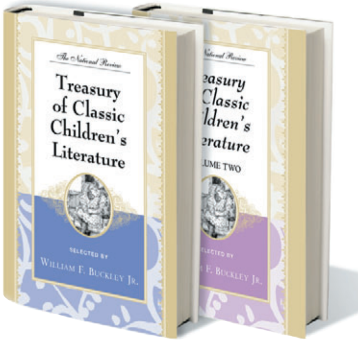

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Tea-party starter Rick Santelli

issues. The emergence of vocal dissenters went a long way toward discrediting that idea.

Almost no political strategists predicted that the president's near-iconic approval ratings would come back to earth so soon and so abruptly. Certainly no one expected a major turning point in the form of town-hall meetings, which members of Congress had been holding for many decades with minimal unrest, usually in an atmosphere of stupefying boredom.

In fact, conventional wisdom among Republican elites early this year was that attacking Obama too quickly would backfire. I remember considerable disdain among GOP elites last winter and spring for the early wave of tea parties. This seems to have influenced political calculations, for instance in the purple 20th congressional district of New York. The Republican candidate to succeed Kirsten Gillibrand, who vacated her House seat to take Hillary Clinton's seat in the Senate, went several weeks without offering a position on President Obama's $787 billion stimulus package. I suspect this happened because his Republican consultants and pollsters were telling him that straddling the issue was preferable to being seen as critical of an attractive young president with approval ratings in the stratosphere.

Fears of premature confrontation probably motivated Republican county chairmen to impose a down-the-line social and economic liberal, New York State assemblywoman Dede Scozzafava, as the Republican nominee in another upstate special election for a House seat. This election, in the historically red 23rd district, was to fill the vacancy left by veteran GOP congressman John McHugh's appointment as secretary of the Army. Scozzafava's backroom selection—there is no need for a primary under New York's special-election law—happened in July, before the town-hall meetings of the August recess made it clear that Obama's honeymoon had ended.

As for the supposedly hate-filled radio and cable hosts, I remember their mood in the immediate aftermath of Obama's inauguration as rather fatalistic. They of course welcomed the populist upsurge, but in its initial stages they seemed as startled as anyone that it was happening so fast and in so many different places, with so little evident top-down leadership or coordination.

If the populist upsurge had little to do with Republican officials or the talk-radio/cable-TV jockeys, how *did* it begin?

The uprising was in fact started by a 56-year-old CNBC business reporter named Rick Santelli. His live, four-minute tirade on February 19 against Obama's mortgage-relief plan was delivered on the floor of the Chicago Mercantile Exchange in pre-market hours, but the Drudge Report linked to it and within hours it had become a YouTube sensation. Santelli's attack on the mortgage bill broadened into an attack on federal bailouts in general; he called for a "tea party" in the spirit of the anti-tax, anti-British outburst in the Boston Harbor of the 1770s. Within days, tea parties were being organized all over the country. They were right-of-center in rhetoric and anti-Obama in an assertive style that violated all conventional wisdom about the appropriate tone of opposition during presidential honeymoons. But they were not necessarily pro-Republican. There was no nostalgia for George W. Bush, who in the midst of the 2008 credit crunch had inaugurated the seemingly never-ending cycle of federal bailouts, and no affection for Republican members of Congress and their leaders, most of whom had been in on the bailouts from Day One.

IN these early days of 2009, the tea partiers' lack of affection for Republican elites seemed fully reciprocated. Republican members of Congress were still numb from the electoral poundings they had taken in 2006 and 2008. The *Politico* and others quoted anonymous GOP consultants' and congressmen's worrying about a voter backlash against the tea parties.

But discontent with Obama had been growing. Weeks before Santelli's outburst led to the first wave of mass discontent, a Gallup survey that in general showed overwhelming public support for Obama's policies found that two of the president's moves had prompted strikingly negative reactions. One concerned a social issue—reversal of the Reagan-originated "Mexico City prohibition" on the use of American foreign-aid funds for overseas abortions—and the other a national-security issue—the announcement that the Guantanamo military prison would close in one year.

But it was debate over Obama's $787 billion stimulus bill—coming amid auto bailouts, sharply increased supplemental spending on the leftover Bush budget, and passage of a fiscal 2010 budget that ensured a second straight federal deficit well in excess of $1 trillion—that marked the end of his honeymoon among Republican voters. While perhaps inevitable given the leftward tilt of the president's emerging policies, it was somewhat unexpected at the time.

Particularly surprised was Pennsylvania's senior senator, Arlen Specter, who had been walking ideological tightropes and living to tell about it for nearly three decades. Specter was one of only three Republicans in either house of Congress to vote for the stimulus package (the others were the Maine senators, Olympia Snowe and Susan Collins). Almost instantly, Specter went from enjoying a solid lead to being well behind in the May 2010 GOP primary. Within weeks, he announced that he would continue his campaign for reelection, but as a Democrat, with backing from President Obama, Senate majority leader Harry Reid, and Pennsylvania governor Ed Rendell.

> It was debate over Obama's $787 billion stimulus bill that marked the end of his honeymoon among Republican voters.

When asked why he was so abruptly changing parties, Specter was refreshingly candid in acknowledging that a single vote, for Obama's stimulus package, had made it impossible for him to survive his state's Republican primary. The stimulus vote was only the most recent of dozens of liberal votes he had cast in his 28-plus years as a left-of-center Republican senator from Pennsylvania in the mold of Hugh Scott, Richard Schweiker, and John Heinz. But none of those earlier votes, unwelcome though they may have been to conservatives, had caused an overnight political earthquake among his constituents. In 2009, the first year of the Obama era, something had changed.

Despite the departure of almost all Republicans and a growing number of independents from the ranks of voters favorably disposed to Obama, congressional Democrats closed ranks, and the administration prevailed in early budget, spending, and tax-increase votes—including the one by which the House passed an atrociously complex and burdensome cap-and-trade climate-change package (opponents quickly rechristened it "cap and tax").

During the summer, the national debate shifted to health care—"reform" of which was the centerpiece of the president's first-term agenda—and Democratic solidarity continued through various committee votes. But legislators soon realized that they were working in the shadow of their already-passed bills, which had pushed Obama's image well to the left of how voters had viewed him in January 2009. And the contraction of

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the president's approval rating among Republican voters increasingly limited the willingness of Republican congressmen and senators to participate in drafting and deal-making.

Growing skepticism among independent voters, coupled with the Congressional Budget Office's projections of sharply increased spending and deficits under the bills emerging from the more liberal congressional committees, began to worry Democratic legislators from center-right states and districts. Each time a new Democratic plan emerged from a committee, new policy details emerged with it—details that often seemed to threaten the ability of Americans to exercise control over their medical treatment and that of their loved ones.

There is no doubt that the town-hall meetings were a psychological turning point in the health-care debate. Before August, while troubled by the heavy weather the emerging committee bills were running into, many if not most Democratic strategists believed passage of Obamacare would help the party politically. But by Labor Day, most of these strategists believed that Obamacare had become a net minus for Democrats, and only the optimistic among them thought the issue would perhaps turn into a plus again before the 2010 elections.

By far the most pivotal event happened on August 7. That was the day a 45-year-old mother of five who had a month earlier announced her resignation as governor of Alaska, definitively ending her political career according to nearly every elite analyst, posted five paragraphs on her Facebook page. The post was titled "Statement on the Current Health Care Debate." Its second paragraph paraphrased conservative economist Thomas Sowell as observing that "government health care will not reduce the cost; it will simply refuse to pay the cost." Sarah Palin went on to pose a question Sowell's dictum implicitly raised: "And who will suffer the most when they ration care? The sick, the elderly, and the disabled, of course. The America I know and love is not one in which my parents or my baby with Down Syndrome will have to stand in front of Obama's 'death panel' so his bureaucrats can decide, based on a subjective judgment of their 'level of productivity in society,' whether they are worthy of health care. Such a system is downright evil."

The elites and the mainstream media pounced on Sarah Palin not just with rebuttals, counterarguments, and "corrections," but with a palpable sense of outrage that such words could be uttered at all, especially by so discredited and disreputable a source. The take of most Washington-based conservative elites involved in the health-care debate was that, while the thrust of Palin's remarks was sound, her use of language like "evil" and "death panel" endangered the credibility of the sober, conscientious analysis they themselves were in the process of disseminating.

Congressional Democrats, coming under heavier fire at their town-hall meetings, reacted differently. They vehemently denied that their proposals called for death panels (the argument, however, had been that it would *lead* to them) and announced just days after Palin's Facebook post that they would remove the creation of voluntary, federally subsidized medical-review committees from their existing committee bills.

BUT this retreat was too late to head off the emergence of the moral/social dimension of the debate as potentially decisive. The fear that federal rules would end up governing medical treatment of the elderly would not go away. And despite many reassurances from the Obama administration and congressional Democrats, the pro-life community, which includes the liberal-leaning National Conference of Catholic Bishops, was unanimously of the opinion that all five committee-approved versions of Democratic health-care legislation would weave government-subsidized abortion rights far more deeply into the fabric of American life.

After days of agonizing and fruitless negotiations with Speaker Nancy Pelosi over compromise pro-life language to be inserted in what Democratic leaders were engineering to be an unamendable bill, Democratic congressman Bart Stupak of Michigan announced that several dozen Democrats would not be able to vote for Obamacare on the House floor. With polls showing that the bill was not very popular in the first place and Republicans opposed to a man, it quickly became evident that the pro-life Democrats had the votes to bring the quest for Obamacare to an end. Pelosi relented, and the House Rules Committee was told to allow a floor vote on the Stupak-Pitts amendment to assure that Obamacare, if passed, would not enable federal funding for abortion. When the vote was held on November 7, 64 of the 258 Democratic congressmen, just short of one-fourth of the Democrats' total House strength, joined the nearly unanimous Republicans in approving Stupak's amendment. Obamacare then survived its up-or-down vote by the underwhelming margin of 220 to 215. All but one of the 177 House Republicans voted against it, along with 39 Democrats.

At this writing, it is widely assumed in Washington that the Democrats will find a way to eliminate or water down the Stupak language in the slightly less pro-life Senate. But if they do, Stupak and a good share of the 63 other Democratic congressmen who voted for Stupak-Pitts will likely oppose the conference report and thus derail final passage. On the other hand, dozens of pro-choice Democrats who held their noses and voted for the pro-life version of Obamacare on November 7 have announced they will not do so a second time. It's hard to imagine a scenario in which Obamacare overcomes this abortion deadlock, quite aside from the question whether

There is no doubt that the town-hall meetings were a psychological turning point in the health-care debate.

Democrats can successfully address all the other objections that emerged in congressional debate and at the passionately contentious town-hall meetings. If August was the month when Obamacare turned into a political minus for Democrats, November may be remembered as the month when a powerful, grassroots-driven coalition of economic and social conservatives crossed party lines to defeat it.

Whatever its impact on health care, the emergence and consolidation of such a coalition would be a seismic event in the conservative movement and in American politics. That such a broad-based populist impulse is capable of translating into electoral results was evident to anyone who looked in on the recent special election in the 23rd congressional district of New York, where the aforementioned liberal Republican, Dede Scozzafava, was overwhelmed and knocked out of the race by Conservative-party candidate Doug Hoffman.

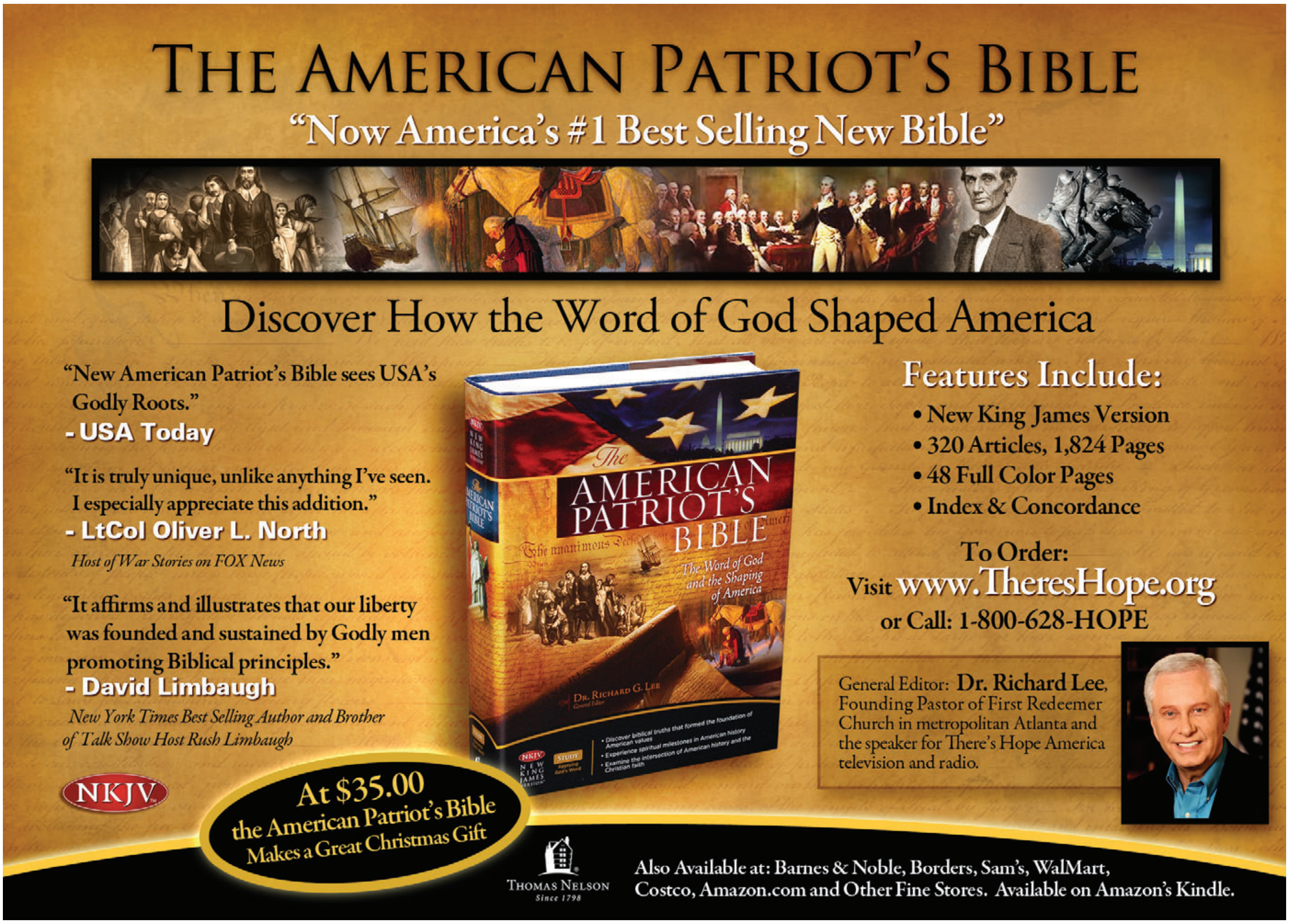
Though Hoffman fell a few votes short of being elected, his campaign was propelled from the beginning by the intervention of the Club for Growth, whose members were indignant at Scozzafava's support for tax increases and "card check," and by social conservatives indignant at her multiple votes for same-sex marriage and abortion rights. Also active in the coalition for Hoffman were veterans of the tea parties.

Completely absent both from the Hoffman campaign mounted by Conservative-party chairman Michael Long and from the various independent-expenditure grassroots efforts were the usual arguments, so ubiquitous among national Republican elites and Washington-based conservatives, over which issues to talk about and which not to. Hoffman included both social and economic issues in his campaign materials, and so did the independent grassroots efforts. Private polling found that both social and economic issues were contributing to Hoffman's unexpected surge.

This wasn't because the activists and voters who swung behind Hoffman agreed with one another on every issue or cared about all issues equally. They didn't. Rather, the threat of being marginalized by someone well to the left on virtually *every* issue seemed more important than intra-conservative disagreements.

Could the conservative populism that has emerged to make 2009 so surprising carry forward and deny reelection to Barack Obama in 2012? If recent political history is any guide, the odds are against it. Only once since 1896 has a party gained the White House in one election and been kicked out of it in the next.

Yet it's intriguing that the party in question was the Democrats, that the president was Jimmy Carter, and that the election of Ronald Reagan was the culmination of a wave of conservative populism in which elites of both parties found themselves utterly out of sync with public opinion. No two election cycles are alike, and I possess no clairvoyance—I was as stunned as anyone when Rick Santelli called for tea parties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on CNBC and then the tea parties proceeded to happen—but as a participant in and amateur analyst of the politics that led to 1980, I feel qualified to list a few of the events that, should you observe them, might lead you to expect something historic.

1. The incumbent president has vast confidence in his superior judgment and is extremely reluctant to make embarrassing midcourse reversals of policy or admit a serious mistake. In other words, a Jimmy Carter, not a Bill Clinton.

2. The challenger is not a serving member of Congress, and his or her visible political success has occurred mainly outside of Washington.

3. At least one important issue or talking point is being treated with disdain by elites, even those on the challenger's side. For Ronald Reagan, that issue was the Panama Canal treaty, which was supported by Barry Goldwater, Bill Buckley, and almost every other high-status conservative.

4. The economy is having major problems.

5. One or more foreign-policy crises are making the incumbent president look clueless to most Americans.

6. The challenger engages in very little "issue selection." He or she is an undiluted conservative, someone who identifies with conservatism on economics, foreign policy, and social issues.

7. The tendency to divide issues into walled-off categories itself fades. The appearance of a social issue, abortion, at the heart of a supposedly bread-and-butter "economic" issue like health care may begin to seem more normal, because an era of polarized politics involves the clash of integrated, internally consistent worldviews. It's seldom recalled that the most controversial speech of Reagan's presidency, the "Evil Empire" address of March 1983, was not focused exclusively on foreign policy, but was delivered to the National Association of Evangelicals and dealt extensively with abortion, contraception propaganda in public-school health clinics, and other social issues.

8. The challenger has one or at most two bold proposals that he or she feels confident enough to defend with specificity and stubbornness, even under the inevitable fierce and focused attack.

9. The challenger is attacked by elites of all stripes, including many in his or her own party. The challenger's negatives remain high until Election Day. (It is often forgotten that Ronald Reagan's negatives were roughly as high as his positives just before he carried 44 states in 1980.)

10. Gaffes by the challenger don't matter much, no matter how often they are repeated by the mainstream media or ridiculed by late-night comedians. Many conservative activists and political junkies agonized over whether voters would reject Reagan because of now-forgotten gaffes about things like "killer trees." They didn't.

In recent months, lyrics from "Where or When," a Rodgers and Hart ballad from the 1930s, have kept popping into my head:

> Some things that happened for the first time
> Seem to be happening again.

If they are—and I certainly hope they are—the conservative nightmare of a transformative leftist presidency could have a happy ending almost no one expected. **NR**

Conserving Liberalism?

Conservatism, modern liberalism, and classical liberalism: a symposium

THAT conservatism rejects much of contemporary liberalism is clear enough. Yet many conservatives speak favorably of "liberal democracy" and its defense. Indeed, they sometimes seem to speak this way more than contemporary liberals do. They use the word "illiberal," meanwhile, to describe many of the ideas and policies they oppose. Some of those typically labeled "conservatives" go so far as to call themselves "classical liberals." The implication of these usages seems to be that conservatism may stand in friendlier relation to older forms of liberalism.

We posed to four eminent political thinkers the question: Should American conservatism be understood as a branch of liberalism, in that liberal institutions and a liberal society are what it chiefly aims to conserve? Their answers appear below.

Robert P. George

ORTHODOX CONTEMPORARY LIBERALISM, the liberalism of Teddy Kennedy and Barney Frank, combines statist social and economic policies with a fierce commitment to lifestyle libertarianism. An earlier strain of liberalism, embodied by Franklin D. Roosevelt, embraced the statism without the lifestyle libertarianism. In its full flower (think of Hubert Humphrey), this form was strongly committed to civil rights—true civil rights, not "civil rights" as a euphemism for lifestyle libertarianism—and to their advancement through national governmental power. More venerable yet is the "old-fashioned liberalism" of Madison and Tocqueville. No mere relic of the past, it counts many contemporary conservatives among its adherents.

Old-fashioned liberalism embraces neither statism nor libertarianism, whether in social and economic policy or on lifestyle issues. Though it insists on constitutional checks on government to protect honorable liberties and the integrity of the family and other institutions of civil society, it does not regard government as an evil. Rather, it understands well-functioning and limited government as indispensable to the common good. While principle dictates government involvement in some matters and forbids it in others, old-fashioned liberalism emphasizes the prudential nature of most policy judgments concerning the regulation of markets or morals. Though they reject unprincipled pragmatism, old-fashioned liberals prize moderation and caution in the vast range of political decision-making that is not determined by principles alone.

What do old-fashioned liberals support? Religious freedom and other basic human rights; political equality and equality of opportunity; constitutional democracy, wherever possible; the rule of law; limited but effective government; a flourishing civil society (including a healthy marriage-and-family culture, vibrant religious communities, and civic associations); personal responsibility; and the market economy, regulated to function for the common good.

Central to old-fashioned liberalism is a belief in the profound, inherent, and equal dignity of every member of the human family. Thus old-fashioned liberals are called conservatives in an age in which not only statism but also abortion, embryo-destructive research, euthanasia, and even eugenics are promoted as progressive causes. Many old-fashioned liberals are Christians or Jews; though prepared to defend their views without appeal to religious authority, they find the scriptural articulation of their core ethical-political commitment in the teaching of Genesis that man is made in God's image and likeness.

How is old-fashioned liberalism *liberal*? It emerged in opposition to European "throne and altar" conservatism, with its monarchism, corporatism, political inequalities, and indifference or hostility to religious freedom and other basic civil liberties and rights. This brand of conservatism was never salient in America. Our conservatives have respected religion and tradition. But they have rightly regarded freedom of religion as necessary for faith's flourishing in modern conditions, and the traditions they have sought to preserve favor constitutionalism, the rule of law, civil liberties, the market economy, limited government, personal responsibility, and civic order and virtue.

Many contemporary conservatives were once Humphrey-type liberals; some—including Mary Ann Glendon, Leon and Amy Kass, and the late Fr. Richard John Neuhaus—were themselves civil-rights activists. It was their commitment to human dignity that led them both into the civil-rights movement and then out of the liberal fold when lifestyle libertarianism became liberal orthodoxy. They did not change their fundamental beliefs; what changed was what counted as *liberal*. And while remaining loyal to the causes of civil rights and equal opportunity, they came to believe that big-government economic and social policies failed to help, and often actually hurt, their intended beneficiaries by, for example, eroding the sense of personal responsibility and by undermining the marriage culture, thus entrenching the poverty against which great civil rights–era liberals such as Humphrey proposed to wage war.

Old-fashioned liberals can make common cause with contemporary libertarians against statist policies now being advanced by President Obama and the Reid-Pelosi Congress. In some cases, however, the old-fashioned liberal critique will differ in important ways from the libertarian critique. The former will often focus on considerations of prudence, not principle (though prudential judgments are often shaped by underlying principled commitments). Where libertarians see a threat to the individual's freedom to do as he pleases, the old-fashioned liberal may see a threat to the autonomy of the family, religious communities, and other institutions of civil society. This will likely be true of debates over health care, education, and taxation.

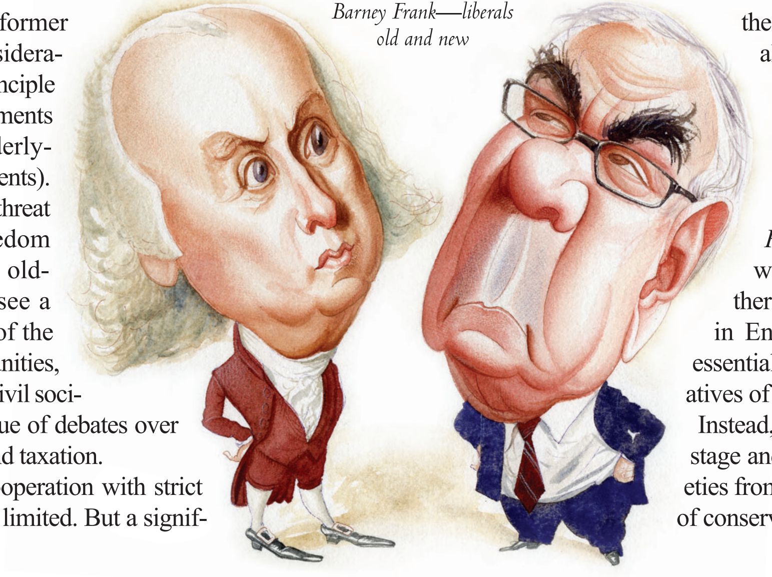
On lifestyle issues, cooperation with strict libertarians will be more limited. But a significant minority of libertarians are pro-life, and many oppose (for good libertarian reasons) government sex-education programs and population policies.

Opportunities for cooperation with orthodox contemporary liberals are fewer. The Obama administration and Congress seem determined to advance the causes of abortion and embryo-destructive research, and their social and economic policies would shift authority and resources from families and private enterprises to the government.

Indeed, Obama, Reid, and Pelosi represent contemporary liberal orthodoxy in its purest distillation. Carter, Clinton, and previous Democratic congressional leaders cannot begin to compare. It is as if the country were being run by Ivy League faculty. In fact, strike the "as if."

So old-fashioned liberals will likely have little choice but to oppose the Obama administration and Congress at virtually every turn, for contemporary liberal orthodoxy is the antithesis of the old-fashioned liberal brand of conservatism.

Mr. George is McCormick Professor of Jurisprudence at Princeton University and a member of the Hoover Institution Task Force on the Virtues of a Free Society. He is the founder of the American Principles Project (www.americanprinciplesproject.org).



James Madison and Barney Frank—liberals old and new

ROMAN GENN

Yuval Levin

SHOULD AMERICAN CONSERVATISM be understood as a branch of liberalism, in that liberal institutions and a liberal society are what it chiefly aims to conserve?

From its earliest days, American conservatism has wrestled with the irony that the tradition that is ours to defend is a liberal one. In a nation that was founded by self-described revolutionaries, that declared its independence in the most eloquent and radical testament to liberal ideals ever written, and that prides itself on liberal institutions and principles, should conservatives defend the liberal order or argue for a different path? Neither option seems especially conservative.

But this is neither a debilitating paradox for conservatives nor a peculiarly American dilemma. Anglo-American conservatism—as opposed to the blood, throne, and altar traditionalism of some continental Europeans—has always been a branch of liberalism properly understood, and has therefore been locked in conflict with more radical liberals over the character and future of the liberal society.

The great 18th-century English statesman Edmund Burke, a father of modern conservatism, described this conflict at its outset. In his *Letters on a Regicide Peace*, Burke argues that in the wake of the French Revolution there were no longer Whigs or Tories in English politics—parties divided essentially on the question of the prerogatives of the monarch and the parliament. Instead, two new parties would take the stage and define the politics of free societies from then on. He called them a party of conservation and a party of Jacobinism, and both were, in a sense, liberal. The question between them was whether liberalism was a way of life or a means to a rational politics; whether it was an end or a beginning for political thought; whether it was defined by its principles in their purity or by its practice, with its exceptional capacity for putting up with diversity, messiness, and uncertainty.

We might say, therefore, that the two parties of modern liberal societies are a party of conservative liberals, who seek to secure the liberal society as a product of countless generations of gradual social and political evolution, and a party of progressive liberals, who seek to go beyond liberalism by using liberal principles to enact a complete break with the past and achieve a politics of rational control.

In this sense, modern conservatism has always been liberal, and there is nothing self-contradictory about the fact that American conservatives are the defenders of classical liberalism in America. There is also nothing terribly surprising about the way in which the modern Left, in its effort to go beyond liberalism, has often undermined and attacked liberalism. This is sometimes hidden from view by our political terminology: The effort to "progress" beyond liberalism has come to be called "liberalism" in our politics, while the effort to treasure and defend the liberal order has come to be called "conservatism."

Part of the reason for this is that, as conservatives know, liberalism even at its best is not self-contained. It is not an expression of our nature (as radical liberals once argued, and progressives now implicitly assume), but is, on the contrary, a fragile edifice erected by means of a massive cultural undertaking to channel the lesser angels of our nature toward decent ends. This means that liberalism feeds on roots, and rests upon foundations, that are decidedly illiberal: It depends upon the family, upon the Judeo-Christian moral order, and upon the Western cultural tradition. It can survive and thrive only when it rests on these; if its connections to them are lost, and liberal principles are taken to be themselves the foundation of a new order, we will lose not only our traditions but liberalism itself. The result, as Burke knew and as revolutionaries ever since his day have demonstrated, is decidedly illiberal and ugly.

It is this vision of liberalism as one crucial element of our larger inheritance—an inheritance to be treasured, protected, and refined—that conservatives defend. This means that we are liberals with an awareness of the prerequisites of liberalism: liberals who defend the liberal society as well as the family, religion, and the Western tradition against liberals who see liberalism as a rejection of those earlier ways of life and a means of building an entirely new order that has no place for them.

The mission of conservatism is thus a demanding one: to defend liberalism from its own excesses and to build on its strengths. Conservatives therefore face a complicated challenge, but recognize that thus is the human condition.

Mr. Levin is the editor of National Affairs *and a fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center. He is the author of* Imagining the Future: Science and American Democracy.

James W. Ceaser

AMERICAN CONSERVATISM is devoted to conserving the American republic. Since the American republic is commonly classified as a "liberal" regime, the question of this symposium almost seems to answer itself: Conservatism today serves liberalism. ("Liberalism" in this context refers to its original 18th-century variety, meaning a limited government whose chief aim is to secure individual rights, rather than the modern variety, meaning a positive state that seeks to establish "social justice.")

Yet it is mistaken to think of conservatism as merely a branch or subsidiary of liberalism. Conservatism may serve liberalism, but it often does so in ways that original liberalism hardly conceived of and that modern liberalism usually rejects. And this it does for liberalism's good. Liberal theory never developed the tools to sustain itself; it has always required something beyond itself to survive. Conservatism, while endorsing so much of liberalism, recognizes and satisfies this need. Without conservatism, liberalism would begin to wither away. In fact it has already begun to do so.

Conservatism conserves the American republic by supporting its theoretical foundation of natural rights. This "abstract truth, applicable to all men and all times" (Lincoln) is something conservatives are not embarrassed to proclaim, even before the United Nations General Assembly. On this point, they are in full accord with the original liberals. Modern liberals, by contrast, are suspicious of metaphysical truths, advertising themselves as pragmatists while hiding their values behind the process of change.

Conservatism conserves the American republic by supporting the idea of the nation. The nation is necessary for security, for the activities of the common political life, and even for the welfare of humanity in general. What entity other than the nation-state, after all, defends us, enacts our laws, and provides for the well-being of many beyond its authority? Conservatism not only recognizes the rational case for the nation but leaves space for justifiable feelings of attachment to it, acknowledging that the heart has its reasons that reason cannot comprehend.

Original liberalism was also a friend of the nation and developed such ideas as sovereignty. But it had difficulty from the first in articulating what the nation-state was beyond a contract, and it could never make full sense of feelings of attachment to it, allowing them therefore to develop unregulated. Modern liberalism, by contrast, has grown increasingly uneasy about the nation. It considers patriotism an anachronism and promotes global citizenship and global studies as replacements for American citizenship and education in our own political tradition.

Conservatism conserves the American republic by supporting the biblical religions, which have been the major source of our ethical system, one of self-restraint and belief in something beyond material existence. Conservatives subscribe to the liberal principles of freedom of religion, nonestablishment, and religious tolerance. But they see no contradiction (why should they?) between holding these principles and promoting reasonable measures—whether these concern immigration, fiscal policy, or education—that seek to preserve the central place of the biblical religions in our culture. Original liberal theory was sometimes cool to religion, failing to acknowledge how much liberal society was borrowing from the storehouse of religious capital. As for modern liberalism (setting aside the important faction that is hostile to biblical religions), it has taken the legal norm of religious freedom and twisted it into a new ideal of neutrality among faiths—an ideal reflected in President Obama's proclamation that America is not "a Christian nation."

Conservatism conserves the American republic by promoting "the tradition," which refers, beyond religion and the

Enlightenment, to the classical Greek and Roman ideals of virtue and excellence. Conservatives subscribe to the liberal principle of equality of rights, but they do so in no small part in order to allow for the emergence of inequalities and excellences. The tradition also provides a theoretical basis for a hierarchy of standards, which gives conservatives the confidence to criticize the vulgarity that pollutes any society and runs rampant in ours. Original liberalism often had the same inclinations—Jefferson spoke of a "natural aristocracy"—but it engaged too easily in attacks on the classics and, in its rationalist exuberance, went too far in elevating utility at the expense of nobility. Modern liberalism, in its focus on compassion, has had difficulty openly supporting and rewarding excellences. It has also allied itself culturally with relativism, which is the application of the idea of equality to all thought. Relativism makes it harder to support standards except those that touch on equality or diversity. Above all, in our universities, modern liberalism has pushed aside the "old books" in order to make room for diversity and identity politics.

Conservatism is the home today for the few remaining full proponents of original liberalism. It is also the home for those friends of liberalism who believe that liberalism's defense requires something more than itself. The combination of these different strands of thought within the same movement produces tensions, but it is also a source of the movement's great creativity. That creativity is best expressed in the view that the public good is not to be found in adherence to the clearest and simplest principles, but rather in the blending of different and partly conflicting ideas. It is above all by acknowledging this fact that today's conservatism is no mere branch of liberalism.

Mr. Ceaser is a professor at the University of Virginia and the author of, among other books, Liberal Democracy and Political Science *and* Nature and History in American Political Development.

Charles R. Kesler

SHOULD AMERICAN CONSERVATISM be understood as a branch of liberalism, in that liberal institutions and a liberal society are what it chiefly aims to conserve?

It depends, as a notorious (and liberal) ex-president might say, on what the meaning of "liberalism" is. In its original sense, liberalism refers to the qualities of the free man (*homo liber*), who is not a slave to someone else or even to his own passions and interests, and who has acquired the habits and virtues, the courtesy and generosity, pertaining to a gentleman (*homo liberalis*). In this sense, liberalism culminates in the liberal arts.

American conservatism seeks to rally free men to defend themselves against servitude and to live happily and morally, and to that extent is a proud branch of this noble liberalism.

In a narrower sense, of course, liberalism means the political and economic doctrines from the 17th century onward that strive to protect the free man and his virtues against contemporaneous threats. Primarily, this means protecting him from governments grown powerful with the fruits of modern science and despotic with the ambitions of perverted religion and ideology. But here one encounters many varieties of liberalism, not all of them sound. John Stuart Mill's version rejects all notions of natural right and social contract in favor of a renovated utilitarianism that, though not his father's utilitarianism, cannot do justice to justice. Hegel's account of liberalism as the final truth of the historical process celebrates the modern state as the apotheosis of freedom and the ethical life, a claim whose credibility diminishes in proportion to one's experience of the modern state. Neither of these liberalisms is what conservatism is seeking to conserve.

Nor is latter-day liberalism, that strange mixture of Hegel's statism with Mill's fondness for experimental lifestyles. Neither man is responsible for the unlovely combination that has resulted, but each might have had some second thoughts had he seen it. Moral anarchy and political collectivism make strange bedfellows—but then there are a lot of strange bedfellows in today's liberalism!

With the liberalism of America's Founders, however, we come to the species that American conservatives are, or at least ought to be, laboring to conserve. The Declaration of Independence and the Constitution are its literary monuments, supplemented by *The Federalist*, the ratification debates, and other words and deeds of the Founders. As a doctrine, natural rights and the social contract stand at its center, drawn from John Locke but interpreted through Americans' common sense and Christianity, and brought to life by the profound prudence of statesmen like James Madison and George Washington.

Conservatism rightly serves this liberalism—though not doctrinairely, because Americans possess a character as well as a doctrine. Proclaiming, rightly, that "all men are created equal," the U.S. became a republican example to mankind. Yet the U.S. Constitution was fashioned, in the preamble's words, for "ourselves and our Posterity" alone. Guided by universal principle, the Founders molded a people with its own history, character, and destiny.

For libertarians, the temptation is to play up the universal principles and forget about the particulars, to reduce America to its liberal principles and forget about the politics and culture required. But liberty is about self-government, not merely limiting the powers of government, important as that is. For traditionalists, the temptation is to cry up the particulars and forget about, or even deny, the universal principles. But prudence looks both to universals and to particulars, mediating between them. Without a proper respect for each, conservatism will neglect the true genius of our institutions and our country.

Part of our task, then, is to prize and preserve both aspects of the country's distinctiveness. We are alive to the American past and want our children to learn to love it in turn, with all its baseness, greatness, and contingency—standing lessons in human nature's variability and utopia's false promises. The adventurous spirit of our entrepreneurs and explorers deserves to be honored and encouraged. What Madison called "veneration" and "reverence" for the Constitution remain vital to our common life, too. Nor can conservatives forget God's role in the American story (or perhaps I should say our role in His story).

America is about liberalism in the healthy but narrow sense, yet it's about more than that. Our character and love of freedom reflect as well the original, more comprehensive sense of the term, even when, as often happens, we fall short of it. A genuinely American conservatism applauds the best of liberalism while refusing to march behind the soiled banners of today's illiberal liberals.

Mr. Kesler is a senior fellow of the Claremont Institute, editor of the Claremont Review of Books, *and professor of government at Claremont McKenna College.*

The Long View

BY ROB LONG

Transcript: *Larry King Live!*

NOVEMBER 18, 2010

LARRY KING: From Apalachicola, Florida! Hello!

CALLER: Hello, Larry. I'd like to ask the sheik . . .

LARRY KING: Do we call you "Sheik"? What's the protocol here? And who the heck gives out those titles? Is there a guy?

SHEIK KHALID MOHAMMED: Oh, no, Larry. There is no guy, per se. It's an honorific. Something my followers have decided to call me.

LARRY KING: Like a Kentucky colonel! Wonderful! Common ground!

SHEIK KHALID MOHAMMED: Yes, yes. Well.

LARRY KING: So what should our caller call you?

SHEIK KHALID MOHAMMED: Well, truthfully, she should not be calling me anything. She shouldn't be speaking to me. She shouldn't be using a telephone, she shouldn't be audible through her burqa, she shouldn't be watching television, she should be stoned to death for her lewd and promiscuous behavior, and her husband should be stoned to death for whoremongering.

LARRY KING: Fair enough! From Cleveland, Ohio, hello!

CALLER: Hey, Lar. Hi, Sheik. I just wanted to know if your guest has had second thoughts about his hatred of the United States, ever since his trial in New York was dismissed due to that chain-of-evidence thing?

LARRY KING: Good question! So, second thoughts? We don't look so bad, sorta kinda?

SHEIK KHALID MOHAMMED: That's an excellent question. Obviously, hey, look, I'm on a book tour, hanging out with Larry King—love your show Larry—

LARRY KING: Thanks! Tomorrow night! Ryan Seacrest talks to the reunited cast of *Saved by the Bell*!

SHEIK KHALID MOHAMMED: Yes, well. As I was saying, of course, here I am traveling across America, using her roads and bridges and airports and critical infrastructure installations, as I talk to people about my book and my struggle, so, yes, I've had a chance to rethink some of my past views about this country. And I'd be lying if I didn't say, truthfully, that some of my past statements may have been a bit "out there," as the kids say. And some of them were taken out of context by a media that just loves controversy.

LARRY KING: "All Americans should be flayed alive, fed to dogs, then the dogs flayed alive, then the whole stinking, rotting mess should be burned in a pillar of purifying flame." That's what you said? Tough stuff!

SHEIK KHALID MOHAMMED: Look, would I choose other words today? Of course. But that was from my opening statement at my trial, which was a very stressful time for me and my family, and I didn't know, at that juncture, that the chain of custody for the evidence collected against me was so murky. I don't want to rehash the trial over and over again, but, you know, there were illegal wiretaps and lots and lots of irregularities and the Constitution is quite clear. I have a right to a fair trial. All Americans do.

LARRY KING: But you're not American.

SHEIK KHALID MOHAMMED: What is this, Larry? Gotcha? You brought me on here to play "Gotcha"?

LARRY KING: The book is *A Softer Jihad—My Life and Journey* and the author is Khalid Sheikh Mohammed! From Salinas, California, hello!

CALLER: Hi, Larry. I was wondering if the sheik is thinking about moving here to this country permanently?

LARRY KING: What about it? I could see you in a South Beach, in a Laguna? I want to say, maybe, a Sea Island condo? Something tasteful and a little removed?

SHEIK KHALID MOHAMMED: You know, Larry, I'm trying to put this delicately, but I also want to be honest. There's a lot about this wonderful land that I truly love. I love your wide open spaces and your Chick-fil-A. I love your rules about proper evidence labeling and where the judge's signature must go for a legally admissible wiretap consent.

LARRY KING: The American exception! The right-wingers love it!

SHEIK KHALID MOHAMMED: But, Larry, I have to tell the truth here. This country is just a very hard place to live in, as a Muslim. There's always this backlash against us, hovering there, waiting to come down. I mean, you'd be amazed—they say they don't profile, they say it's all random, but when I try to board a plane, they always—always, Larry!—pull me aside for a thorough search. Other people just sail through, but because I'm a Muslim and I'm Sheik Khalid Mohammed, the quote-unquote mastermind of 9/11, I get totally, totally hassled.

LARRY KING: But just so I get this: You still want to kill all Americans, right?

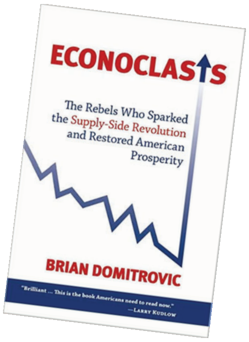
SHEIK KHALID MOHAMMED: Well, yes, of course. I'm still me. But right now, I'm just trying to make people aware of my new book.

LARRY KING: And a great book it is! This weekend! John Madden talks about his colonoscopy!

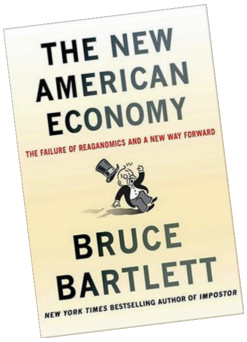
Books, Arts & Manners

Revolutionary Road

KEVIN A. HASSETT


ECONOCLASTS
The Rebels Who Sparked the Supply-Side Revolution and Restored American Prosperity
BRIAN DOMITROVIC
"Brilliant ... This is the book Americans need to read now." —Larry Kudlow

Econoclasts: The Rebels Who Sparked the Supply-Side Revolution and Restored American Prosperity, by Brian Domitrovic (ISI, 368 pp., $27.95)


THE NEW AMERICAN ECONOMY
THE FAILURE OF REAGANOMICS AND A NEW WAY FORWARD
BRUCE BARTLETT
NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF IMPOSTOR

The New American Economy: The Failure of Reaganomics and a New Way Forward, by Bruce Bartlett (Palgrave Macmillan, 272 pp., $28)

When Arthur Laffer left Stanford University in 1967, he was on a swiftly rising professional trajectory. He finished his dissertation and received his Ph.D. in 1972, but, between 1969 and 1972, he published eight papers in top economic journals, including the distinguished *American Economic Review* and *Journal of Political Economy*. He spent a year plus at the Brookings Institution and was one of the youngest people ever tenured at the University of Chicago. Only the rarest of talents achieve such instant success. Laffer's top-tier publication output in his first years out of graduate school was about double that of the highly regarded Christina Romer, the current chairman of President Obama's Council of Economic Advisers.

But while he was taking the academic profession by storm, Laffer made an unusual choice for an economist so young and promising. He decided to work for a Republican, accepting President Nixon's offer to become chief economist for the Office of Management and Budget. There, his charisma, sharp intellect, and willingness to debate lifted him to almost instant political fame. To put that fame in perspective, and to provide a proper measure of the man, I challenge even the most politically obsessed reader to name another person who has ever held that post.

What happened next forms the riveting introduction to *Econoclasts*, historian Brian Domitrovic's landmark new history of the supply-side revolution. While at the OMB, Laffer developed a novel model for forecasting GDP. His model suggested a somewhat more optimistic future than was the current consensus. The Left, recognizing its opportunity, pounced. Paul Samuelson of MIT, the dean of the American economics establishment, visited the legendary economics department of the University of Chicago and delivered a lecture with a title that astonishes to this day: "Why They Are Laughing at Laffer." Domitrovic quotes Reagan adviser Martin Anderson on what happened at that lecture. Samuelson was, Anderson said, "small and he was mean. But what he did to Laffer that day in Chicago, even by academic standards of morality, was an extraordinary example of intellectual bullying."

Yet Laffer's forecast ended up being, in Domitrovic's words, "borne out perfectly." Indeed, a look at the methods Laffer employed suggests that he was a pioneer in the analysis of time-series data. The model that Samuelson considered a laughing matter was an early and perhaps the first example of the type of advanced econometric model known as a "vector autoregression." These are now commonly relied upon. But the lecture was an important turning point in history: That such a senior member of a profession could attack so viciously a cub right out of graduate school, and could do so without incurring the displeasure of other academics who purport to defend a climate of open and civil debate, established once and for all that the rules for conservatives were henceforth going to be different. Today, Paul Krugman plays the role of Samuelson twice a week in the *New York Times*.

Clearly, it could not have been a faulty forecast that elicited such an astonishing breach of collegiality from such a giant as Samuelson. As if economists had never made a bad forecast before. No, the problem must have been that Samuelson foresaw the existential threat to American liberalism embodied in the free-market views of Laffer. Just as the Left anoints its champions with MacArthur genius grants and Nobel prizes, it seeks to marginalize its opponents with the accusation that they are cranks. As bad as the treatment of Judges Bork and Thomas was, the treatment of Laffer was worse.

The remarkable thing about the story is that it does not end there. Laffer may have been successfully blackballed from the polite lunchrooms of academe, but he was not so easily derailed from his task. Domitrovic's restrained prose brings us into the room at the New York restaurant Michael 1 where Laffer and Bob Bartley of the *Wall Street Journal* collaborated with Jude Wanniski to develop a new worldview that would alter the path of U.S. history.

Without the dogged devotion of that small group, a reader of this book can only conclude, Reagan would never have been possible. Laffer's legendary napkin drawing demonstrating that higher tax rates need not produce higher revenue would have been tossed out with the leftovers. Before low taxes and smaller government could revive a moribund nation on a path to socialism, someone had to make the case that they could, and stick with it while being ridiculed by the academic establishment. Until I read *Econoclasts*, I had never fully appreciated the heroism of the supply-side revolution's founders.

It is indeed ironic that this book should arrive at almost precisely the same moment as former Reagan administration economist Bruce Bartlett's new book, *The New American Economy*. Bartlett is the

Mr. Hassett is director of economic-policy studies at the American Enterprise Institute.

author of a bestselling book about George W. Bush with the inflammatory title *Impostor*, a book he claims cost him his job at a conservative think tank. There is perhaps no man so praiseworthy in "elite" circles as the prodigal conservative who has "seen the light." Bartlett has been practically blinded by it, and has, accordingly, become a media darling.

In his new book, Bartlett argues that "just as Keynesian economics went off on the wrong track and became discredited, I think supply-side economics has also reached the end of its useful life." Bartlett goes on to make a depressingly convincing argument that, in the U.S. at least, this is the case.

The problem is that the supply-side formula requires lower taxes *and* smaller government. You cannot, Bartlett correctly argues, have one without the other. In the U.S., government spending has advanced steadily under both Democratic and Republican administrations. The difference between Republicans and Democrats appears to be that Republicans, who oppose higher taxes in almost every form, pursue policies that end up being unsustainable.

As bad as it is today, when one looks ahead to an America that shortly will have the same age distribution that Florida has now, one can only conclude that it is going to get much worse. The health bills of our senior citizens alone may well exceed the current size of government in a few decades. Bartlett starts a difficult conversation. If we cannot constrain the growth of government, are we going to try to run a Ponzi scheme, or are we going to pay for it? If we choose the latter, how are we going to raise the money? Bartlett's answers are well researched, drawing on a massive literature.

An intransigent conservative will be disappointed that Bartlett does not address the facts that are most at odds with his assertion that supply-side economics is dead. Even as Samuelson's equally political nephew, Larry Summers, and the rest of President Obama's team appear to be engineering the final triumph of academic quasi-socialism, many countries around the world, from Sweden to China, have embraced supply-side views and seen positive results. Low tax rates have achieved a cachet in Europe that Laffer never would have dreamed of. So why is supply-side economics dead for the U.S.?

In correspondence with me, Bartlett has argued that our form of democracy is incapable of reducing spending efficiently because the ruling party in America has much less power than the ruling party in a parliamentary democracy. We are, he concludes, going to spend more, and we might as well face it and raise taxes to pay for it. He may be right, but the battle is certainly not over.

After reading both books, a conservative cannot help but be troubled by the parallels between the lives of Bartlett and Laffer. Laffer spoke truths that were unpopular with liberals, and they sent out Hercules to slay him. Bartlett challenged sacred tenets of Laffer's teachings, and similarly was ridiculed and cast out.

It is impossible to say how the American future will play out, but one can say with confidence that a team that casts out heretics has lost its way, and has stooped to the kind of thought control practiced so efficiently by the Left. Bartlett's book is short but weighty, and any honorable descendant of the pioneers who launched the supply-side revolution should welcome him to the dinner table—and bring a clean white napkin. **NR**

THE LATE JANE AUSTEN'S NIECE EVENTUALLY DESTROYS THE MANUSCRIPT OF HER OWN NOVEL

The paper cringes in the heat;
The ashes flake off sheet by sheet.

The oldest child in her worn dress
Is watching, thoroughly impressed,

But not at all concerned to know
The source of this unlooked-for show;

She only relishes her mother
Piling one section on another.

Clear and impeccable, the frost falls.
It is the perished, here to claim it all.

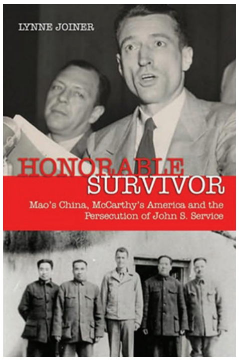
Steadfast in helplessness, the buds cling.
They are the future, thief of everything.

And in the center that she once mistook
For somewhere else, a woman burns a
book.

—SARAH RUDEN

Secret Service

HARVEY KLEHR


LYNNE JOINER
HONORABLE SURVIVOR
Mao's China, McCarthy's America and the Persecution of John S. Service

Honorable Survivor: Mao's China, McCarthy's America, and the Persecution of John S. Service, by Lynne Joiner (Naval Institute, 450 pp., $37.95)

THE period since the collapse of the Soviet Union has not been kind to the dozens of Americans accused of collaboration with Soviet intelligence during the 1930s and 1940s. Each new revelation from Russian archives, and each new release of decrypted Soviet communications from declassified top-secret American archives, has brought more bad news to the left-wing intelligentsia, among whom hope springs eternal that someday a document will turn up—preferably signed by Richard Nixon, J. Edgar Hoover, and Joseph McCarthy—ordering the framing of distinguished public servants as Soviet spies. Instead, the verdicts have come in a cascade. Alger Hiss, guilty. Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, guilty. Harry Dexter White, guilty. I. F. Stone, guilty. And on and on.

There have been two major exceptions. New evidence has confirmed that Robert Oppenheimer, architect of the atomic-bomb project, while a secret Communist, did not cooperate with Soviet agents. And, more than 15 years ago, Ronald Radosh and I concluded that John Stewart Service, one of the State Department's China hands, pilloried as a spy for his involvement in

Mr. Klehr, a professor of history and politics at Emory University, is the author most recently (with John Earl Haynes and Alexander Vassiliev) of Spies: The Rise and Fall of the KGB in America.

the *Amerasia* case, was, in fact, innocent. Service had been arrested in 1945 along with several others and charged with providing secret documents to a pro-Communist magazine editor. The case against him soon fell apart and a grand jury unanimously refused to indict. Five years later, Senator McCarthy revived the charges, and Service was denounced for having contributed to the fall of China to Mao Tse-tung's forces. After losing his security clearance in a protracted legal battle, he won vindication in the courts and returned to minor postings in the State Department. Although we found no evidence that Service had ever been a spy, we argued, based on then newly released documentary materials, that he had been secretly trying to undermine American policy in China by leaking confidential documents and inadvertently become enmeshed in an espionage plot.

Lynne Joiner's new book does not alter our verdict that Service was innocent of espionage. But it does try to change the picture of Service, transforming him from a foolhardy diplomat so convinced of his own righteousness that he assiduously worked to undermine his superiors into a man of rectitude and honesty whose promising career was unfairly derailed. Despite a number of interesting observations, new documentary sources, and a felicitous writing style, Joiner fails to make a convincing case.

Service's increasingly outspoken belief that American policy in China should tilt away from Chiang Kai-shek and toward the Communists led him to disaster after his return to the U.S. in 1945, as he fell in with a cabal of Communists and sympathizers, led by Philip Jaffe, eager to obtain government secrets and turn them over to Soviet intelligence. They could hardly believe their luck when Service, eager to damage the Nationalists, started providing them with material. Watching and listening to their wiretapped conversations was the FBI, which had been investigating Jaffe and his friends for a few months as a result of the discovery of hundreds of top-secret documents during an illegal search of the offices of *Amerasia*, a journal he edited and owned. Among other tidbits, the taps picked up Service's informing Jaffe that "what I told you is secret," and Jaffe's telling an associate that he had been approached by a friend who worked for Soviet intelligence and wanted to obtain material from Service's section of the State Department. Jaffe was determined to cooperate, salivating about what he could extract from Service.

The espionage cases against the six defendants arrested in May 1945 rapidly fell apart, to a large extent because much of the government's evidence had been gathered without warrants. It is a depressing and sordid story, from which none of those involved emerged looking competent or honorable. The FBI and the Justice Department had counted on the cooperation with the government of at least one of the arrestees; that would have enabled prosecutors to avoid revealing their tainted investigative tools. One obvious candidate was Service, since the case against him was weak. He could testify about Jaffe's constant requests for documents; his friends in government, however, worried that such a course of action would destroy his career and, potentially, open an unsavory can of worms, exposing their own machinations. They persuaded Tommy Corcoran, the premier "fixer" in Washington, to assist Service. He traded favors with high-ranking Justice Department officials to ensure that his client was treated with kid gloves when he appeared before the grand jury.

Not one *Amerasia* defendant went to jail, but the issue refused to go away. Joiner is so intent on rehabilitating Service that she ignores compelling evidence that a variety of witnesses, including Service, lied about the affair. Further, when a Loyalty Review Board investigated him, he was bedeviled by another indiscretion from his past. With his wife and children evacuated to the U.S. for the duration of the war, he began an affair in China in 1944 with a prominent actress, Val Chao, whom both Nationalists and Communists believed was working for the other side. Falling in love, he wrote his wife for a divorce, but the two reconciled during his brief trip home in 1944. He decided he could not abandon his family, but never informed his Chinese lover, who by this time was pregnant with their child.

Learning that Service's wife was herself now expecting a child, and bitter at her treatment, Chao had an abortion, arranged by one of Service's embassy colleagues. But that was hardly the end of the problem. Chao arrived in the U.S. in 1946, once again pregnant after an affair with an Army officer, to study at Yale. Although she did not see Service—now on his way to Japan—she harbored fantasies about raising the child as his. They did meet in 1949, shortly after Mao's victory and just before her return to China. Years later, Chao recalled that Service promised he would join her at some point; Service remembered only being asked for his advice about whether she should go back. Chinese Nationalist sources tried to use the affair to discredit him; it was a factor in the decision of the Loyalty Review Board in 1951 to find "reasonable doubt" as to Service's loyalty. He was promptly fired.

Six years after his dismissal, a unanimous Supreme Court ordered him reinstated. During the course of a routine security investigation late in the 1950s, Service finally heard the FBI wiretap transcripts of Jaffe's boasting of the material he had obtained from him. Service also learned that his Chungking roommate Sol Adler had sent copies of his reports to another Soviet spy, Harry Dexter White. He admitted that he had been "used," felt "horrified," and agreed that the evidence had been sufficient to support his firing as a security risk.

Joiner sniffs at the gossip about Service's extramarital affair and complains that it was used to smear him. And, in retrospect,

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it does not appear that Chao was a Communist, much less a spy. But, years later, Service conceded that his relationship with her was "probably unwise"—and that it would have been a dereliction of duty if investigators had not taken into account the potentially fatal doubts that it had cast on his judgment and reliability. It was neither paranoia nor a smear to suggest that John Service might be a security risk.

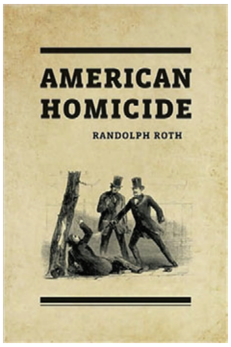
Joiner also underplays the evidence that Adler and another friend of Service, T. A. Bisson, were Soviet agents. And she never mentions that a wiretap picked up a conversation in which Jaffe informed Service that Chi Ch'ao-ting, his upstairs neighbor in Chungking, was Jaffe's cousin, and that Jaffe was anxious to keep that information secret. Even though Service was well aware of Jaffe's pro-Communist leanings, he agreed not to let anyone know—including his State Department superiors, who certainly would have been interested to learn that news, particularly since Chi also turned out to be a Communist mole. Service's friendships, both in China and in the U.S., were a security nightmare.

Rather than consider what was so honorable about Service's behavior, Joiner apologizes for his unethical actions, willingness to protect people he must have at least suspected had ulterior motives for cultivating him, and prevarications when under investigation. She acknowledges that Corcoran manipulated the Justice Department, that some of its top lawyers pressured subordinates to go easy on Service, and that Service was aware of these maneuverings. She concedes that his behavior was hardly diplomatic or honorable, noting that "in hindsight it is hard to fathom" how he could have been so reckless.

Sen. Henry Cabot Lodge offered a cogent assessment of Service: He was not disloyal but "gullible and indiscreet." No doubt he paid a high price for his indiscretions, but Joiner's understandable sympathy for his travails does not erase the fact that he was the author of many of them. Many of his friends and acquaintances were Communist spies who used him to advance the interests of a totalitarian political movement that wound up killing tens of millions of people. Just why his self-righteousness, Joseph McCarthy's bullying, and a bungled government investigation should turn him into a man of honor is never explained in this interesting but flawed book. **NR**

Bloodless Saga

THEODORE DALRYMPLE



American Homicide, by Randolph Roth
(Harvard, 672 pp., $45)

ALMOST everyone is interested in murder, in theory if not in practice, and literature would be quite at a loss without it. Suppose, for example, that Hamlet's father had died of old age, or Banquo of a pulmonary embolus; one cannot help but feel that the subsequent drama would have been rather less compelling.

In my time as a prison doctor I have met quite a few murderers, one or two of them world-famous in their field; and I have found that anecdotes of such murderers, suitably anonymized of course, seldom go amiss at dinner parties when conversation flags. Indeed, they seem to revive flagging appetites also, for there is nothing like a nice asphyxiation to go with a crème brûlée.

It has to be confessed, however, that interest in murder is mainly of the prurient kind. By contrast, the academic study of unlawful killing can be rather dry—the academic, after all, can suck the juice from any subject—and anyone looking for cheap thrills in Prof. Randolph Roth's book is likely to be disappointed. It contains many vignettes of individual crimes, but they are cursory and over in a couple of lines, with none of the lingering over

Mr. Dalrymple, a doctor, is the author of several books, including The New Vichy Syndrome: Why European Intellectuals Surrender to Barbarism, *forthcoming from Encounter Books in March 2010.*

detail so beloved of readers of crime fiction.

The fact is that most homicides are merely sordid rather than intriguing, a fact noted long ago by Thomas De Quincey in his famous essay “Murder Considered as One of the Fine Arts.” In any case, Professor Roth is a historical sociologist rather than a novelist, and treats homicide as an aggregate social phenomenon, rather as Emile Durkheim treated suicide. He is more interested in statistics than in stories, the latter being for him but corroboration of the former.

Homicide, like suicide, appears at first sight to be the most individual of acts: the outcome of a unique response to unique personal circumstances. However, it is subject on a population level to statistical regularities and fluctuations, and this leads naturally enough to a search for influences or forces that go beyond those of individual psychology. Even the fact that most murderers are male, a constant in all societies, suggests a hormonal component to murder.

Professor Roth examines the history of homicide in America from the colonial period to just before World War I, with only a brief excursus into more recent times, mainly through the lens of fluctuating rates in time, region, and race. Class does not come much into his analysis, perhaps because the statistics on class through most of that history are lacking, and would be very difficult to calculate.

His conclusions from the statistics cannot, of course, be more certain or credible than the statistics themselves. At times, indeed, he shows a rather naïve confidence in the correspondence of his numbers to reality. He thinks that his statistics can reveal the “final,” “real,” and “root” causes of a social phenomenon such as homicide, as if any such finality could exist.

There are other problems. He uses the homicide rate per 100,000 inhabitants as his preferred standard of comparison, but this is not legitimate in comparisons of very large with very small populations, or of different small populations. In very small populations, unusual events can give a misleading statistical impression. One would not say that in the Smith family the murder rate in a certain year was 75,000 per hundred thousand because in that year Mr. Smith killed his wife and two children, or that, over a ten-year period, it had been 7,500 per hundred thousand.

And, if it is true that homicide is everywhere and always disproportionately committed by one age group rather than another, the age structure of a population, which can and does vary over time, alters the validity of comparisons made without appropriate adjustments. Furthermore, homicide is the endpoint of a process whose outcome varies across ages. For example, it has been calculated that if the same resuscitation and surgical techniques were used today as were used in 1960, the homicide rate would be up to five times more than it is. People whose lives are now saved would in those days have died, and this gives a false impression of the relative violence of society then and now.

And if it is true that it is easier to kill with a handgun than with a handsaw, say, a lesser degree of homicidal intent will be necessary to result in a fatality with the former than with the latter. (Of course, it is possible that the presence of lethal weapons might make everyone more careful.) There is therefore no necessary connection between homicidal intentions or emotions and the rate of homicide, as there needs to be if you are going to draw the kind of conclusions that Professor Roth draws.

Of course, some statistical changes are so startling that they overwhelm any possible caveat. For example, in 1950 there were 200 violent crimes recorded in the whole of New Zealand; in 1999 there were 70,000. Even allowing for the doubling of the population, and for differences in the way crimes were classified and recorded, the difference is so great that it must surely reflect a change in reality: a conclusion borne out by everyone’s personal experience.

Some of Roth’s statistical differences are of this order, but many are not. It seems beyond doubt, for example, that the Gold Rush days in California were very violent: The Wild West really was wild. But quite a number of his comparisons are based on statistics whose margin of error might easily eliminate the putative differences on which he relies. There is not much discussion of these problems in what is a very long book.

But let us take the figures at their face value. What does Roth say that they show?

In essence, he says that the homicide rate is a reflection of the state of social and political solidarity of a population. Social solidarity is not necessarily good by our current moral standards, however. For example, where whites felt it important

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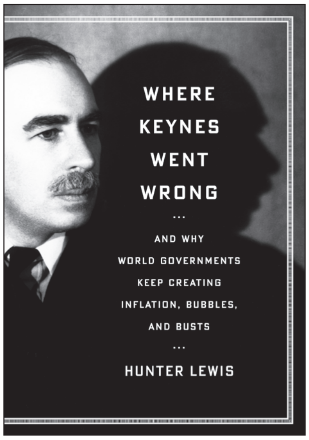

Where Keynes Went Wrong

BY HUNTER LEWIS

$18 (hardcover) • ISBN 978-1-60419-017-5

When the world financial system failed in 2008, world governments used a playbook devised by famed British economist John Maynard Keynes. But should we be relying so completely on Keynes? What if he is wrong? If Keynes is wrong, then so are the economic policies of Barack Obama, George W. Bush, and virtually all world governments today. *Where Keynes Went Wrong* addresses these critical questions in a lively, stimulating, and transparently clear style.

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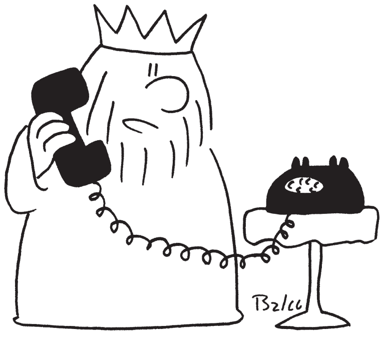
and necessary to dominate blacks, and were actually able without difficulty to do so, they were less inclined to kill one another (or blacks for that matter). But once their dominance was threatened, they started to kill, if not with abandon, at least more frequently, and often over trifles.

Why should this have been? Here Roth has a plausible psychological explanation that accords with my own experience of murderers. (It is one of the strengths of his book that he is able to articulate both individual psychology and larger social and economic forces without in any facile way seeing crime as the inevitable outcome of poverty.) People who live in a very hierarchical society—as was the South—need to feel superior to someone for the sake of their own self-regard. Membership of the dominating race conferred this feeling automatically on whites when blacks were officially held inferior. But when the old hierarchy was overturned, even only partially, this comfort was no longer available to poor whites. They therefore became irritable over supposed matters of honor, such as perceived insults and slights, and ready to kill or to die to defend that supposed honor.

The author explains, sensibly, that in such matters people's perception of reality is more important than reality itself. If people think that society is just and founded on a rock, it matters not, at least for a time, that from another standpoint it is unjust and founded on sand. With their illusions, they will be peaceable. What mattered about FDR, for example, was not that he tackled unemployment during the Depression, but that people thought that he did: He and his government were doing their best and cared for the little man. As a result the little man was not so frustrated by the Depression that he killed his neighbors out of pique—even if, in fact, the New Deal actually prolonged his poverty and unemployment. The homicide rate did go down in the Roosevelt years before World War II.



"Yes, this is us speaking."

But here, it seems to me, the author misses a trick. It is curious that as Western societies have become both richer and more just in the Rawlsian sense, so their crime rates have risen rather than fallen, precisely the opposite of what one might have predicted. Why is this?

The answer to this seeming paradox lies in meritocracy. Irrespective of how meritocratic our societies actually are, we believe we live in meritocracies. The good news about meritocracy is that we can attribute our successes to ourselves, like Josiah Bounderby of Coketown; but the bad news is the corollary that we attribute more of our failures to ourselves also. Since it is very difficult for human beings to do this, and failure is more common than success, many people take refuge in a prickly resentment, and a proportion of them are ready to resort to violence.

A meritocracy, therefore, is in urgent need of a repressive apparatus, for where else is control of criminality and violence to come from? Religion and ethical teaching are by themselves likely to be insufficient. On the matter of the criminal justice system, however, Professor Roth is ambivalent. He several times states that punishment has had no discernible effect through history on the homicide rate in America, though he can't fully believe this since he also states several times that the homicide rate rose dramatically wherever the state and the criminal justice system were weak or nonexistent.

Moreover, the recent falls in homicide in New York and California do suggest that if you lock up people with a propensity to violence, there is, unsurprisingly, less violence all round, including homicide. One important aspect of homicide that the author scarcely considers is the violent histories of most killers. Rarely is homicide the first occasion on which a man breaks the law with violence.

The author has clearly labored mightily over this book; he has gathered an immense amount of information. He writes clearly; he never descends to hiding his meaning behind a smokescreen of obfuscatory jargon. It seems churlish then, and it gives me no pleasure, to say that his book is neither a joy to read nor enlightening in proportion to its length. Rossini's judgment of Wagner kept recurring to me: The book has its good moments but its bad quarters of an hour. **NR**

The Mobility Agenda

DUNCAN CURRIE

Creating an Opportunity Society,
by Ron Haskins and Isabel Sawhill
(Brookings, 347 pp., $28.95)

BACK in the heady days of July 2007—shortly after the White House celebrated National Homeownership Month, and before the term "subprime mortgage" became ubiquitous in our political discourse—the *New York Times* commenced a series titled "Age of Riches," exploring the lives of those who had grown fantastically affluent in America's "New Gilded Age." The inaugural entry in this series likened the concentration of wealth in the early 21st century to those of the mid-1910s and the late 1920s. IRS figures show that the top 1 percent of income earners collected nearly 23 percent of America's adjusted gross income (AGI) in 2007, compared with 12.3 percent in 1987. The top *one-tenth* of 1 percent of earners received almost 12 percent of AGI, up from 8.1 percent in 2001. As the 2008 election campaign gathered steam, all the top Democratic presidential contenders were railing against income inequality, with John Edwards reprising his shopworn "Two Americas" theme. On the Republican side, Mike Huckabee got into the act.

Then came the financial meltdown and the global recession, which pushed inequality to the back burner. Even the *Times* has changed its tune: "The rich, as a group, are no longer getting richer," it reported in August. "Over the last two years, they have become poorer."

Yet Wall Street's implosion did not change the fundamental dynamics that have been exerting upward pressure on inequality. The interaction between a rising skill premium and polarizing cultural trends continues to foster social stratification. As Brookings Institution scholar Alan Berube points out, the current jobless numbers vary significantly based on educational attainment: In October, the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate among those with less than a high-school diploma was 15.5 percent; among high-school graduates without a college degree, it was 11.2 percent; but among those with a bachelor's degree or higher, it was only 4.7 percent. Berube argues that the Great Recession "could actually accelerate a longer-run increase in inequality, especially among workers with different skill levels."

Congressional Democrats are seeking to mitigate inequality through higher taxes on upper earners and an expanded welfare state. Republicans generally oppose these initiatives; yet when it comes to tackling the economic disparities and anxieties of the Information Age, they have struggled to coalesce behind a clear center-right agenda. Meanwhile, a small cluster of journalists, think-tankers, and policy wonks have been trying to formulate one.

They will find a veritable armory of intellectual firepower in *Creating an Opportunity Society*, the new book by Brookings scholars Ron Haskins and Isabel Sawhill. Packed with a dizzying array of statistics and reform ideas, the book lays out a detailed blueprint for promoting economic mobility. Its recommendations are a centrist mix, which comes as no surprise: Haskins worked for the Bush (43) administration, Sawhill served in the Clinton administration, and the authors acknowledge that they "do not always agree."

Mobility, not inequality, is the key indicator of economic opportunity. The two are not necessarily correlated: If income inequality has gone up since the early 1980s, that doesn't necessarily mean income mobility has gone down. Indeed, a 2007 Treasury Department study concluded that "relative income mobility has neither increased nor decreased over the past 20 years."

On the other hand, structural forces have widened certain gaps between high- and low-education workers. The gradual disappearance of well-paying low-skill jobs—which, contrary to popular views, can be attributed more to technology than to foreign trade—has had a depressing effect on mobility. Haskins and Sawhill reckon that only 11 percent of children from families in the bottom income quintile graduate from college, compared with 25 percent of children from the middle income quintile and 53 percent from the top quintile.

Broadly speaking, they advocate a three-pronged strategy for boosting mobility: Improve public education, encourage work, and strengthen families. Their education proposals include expanding pre-school programs, implementing national achievement standards, establishing more "paternalistic" charter schools (modeled on the popular KIPP system) and undertaking a robust evaluation of these schools, providing low-income and minority pupils with better college-prep services, simplifying the federal student-aid process, lifting the Pell Grant ceiling, and revamping state college funding in hopes of spurring the recruitment of more disadvantaged students.

Incentivizing work was a central component of welfare reform—which Haskins, as a House staffer, helped devise—and it is a central component of the Haskins-Sawhill mobility plan. The authors support enlarging the size and scope of the Child Tax Credit, increasing child-care funding, and bolstering job-training programs. They also want to build on the successful Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and experiment with "EITC-type wage supplements" for workers who either don't have children or don't have custody of their children.

In their section on family formation, Haskins and Sawhill address a longstanding social crisis: the surge in nonmarital births. In 2007, nearly 40 percent of all U.S. births were outside of marriage, up from 34 percent in 2002, 18.4 percent in 1980, and 5.3 percent in 1960. Nonmarital births remain predominantly a lower-class phenomenon. "In 2007," the authors write, "the least educated women were six times as likely as the most educated women to have a baby outside marriage." Last year, according to the Census Bureau, only 40 percent of African-American children lived with two parents, compared with 78 percent of non-Hispanic white children.

University of Chicago economist James Heckman, a 2000 Nobel laureate, stresses that the children of less-educated women are receiving far fewer parental resources than the children of more-educated women. These parenting disparities are fueling unequal life outcomes: Heckman believes that "about 50 percent of the variance in inequality in lifetime earnings is determined by age 18," and that "most of the gaps at age 18 that help to explain gaps in adult outcomes are present at age five."

But the secret to escaping poverty is no secret at all: As Haskins and Sawhill note, "those who finish high school, work full time, and marry before having children are virtually guaranteed a place in the middle class. Only about 2 percent of this group ends up in poverty." They tout this as "the success sequence," and concur with the observation by journalist Jonathan Rauch that marriage has become "the great class divide of the new century."

So should the government be bankrolling marriage-training projects? Pres. George W. Bush launched three major marriage-education experiments, known as Building Strong Families (BSF), Supporting Healthy Marriage (SHM), and the Community Healthy Marriage Initiative. While Haskins and Sawhill cite various problems with the BSF and SHM experiments, the social-science literature makes them "cautiously optimistic" that Bush's marriage programs "will produce meaningful impacts over the long run.

All told, Haskins and Sawhill estimate that the combined price tag for their smorgasbord of policies (only some of which are mentioned above) would be just north of $20.5 billion. Not so long ago, that was considered a lot of money; but not in today's Washington, with its mega-bailouts, $787 billion stimulus packages, and trillion-dollar health-care legislation.

This is not to say that all of the Haskins-Sawhill ideas are worth pursuing. (American Enterprise Institute scholar Charles Murray, among others, is deeply skeptical of early-childhood intervention; he is also the intellectual leader of the "too many people are going to college" brigades.) But the authors have thought long and carefully about their subject matter. In many ways, their fair-minded and illuminating discussion is even more valuable than their proposals. *Creating an Opportunity Society* overflows with keen social and economic insights. It deserves the attention of conservative and liberal policymakers alike. **NR**

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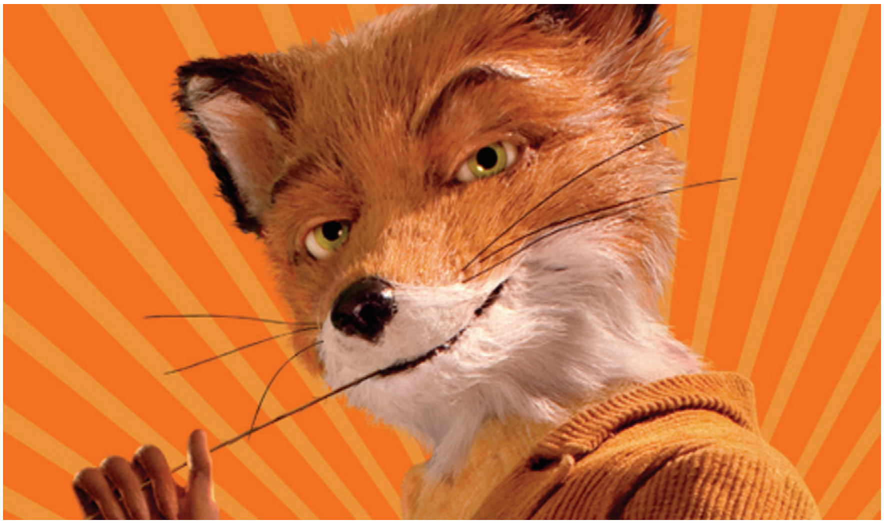
Film

The War Against Fox

ROSS DOUTHAT

THIS is the autumn, apparently, for our hippest filmmakers to get in touch not only with their inner child, but with their inner puppeteer as well. First it was Spike Jonze, whose *Where the Wild Things Are* conjured looming, lumbering monsters out of feathers, fur, and a daub of CGI. Now it's Wes Anderson's turn: In *Fantastic Mr. Fox*, a stop-motion adaptation of Roald Dahl's sleek novella, he's one-upped Jonze's super-sized marionettes with a cast of miniaturized marvels, foxes and badgers and possums and rats, all exquisitely handcrafted and brought to life one painstakingly arranged frame at a time.



Mr. Fox

FOX

It's a near-perfect marriage of filmmaker and form, since you might say that Anderson has spent most of his career trying to apply a stop-motion style to live-action films. From *Rushmore* onward, his sets have been designed within an inch of their life, and he's arranged his actors against them like figures in a diorama, or dolls in the world's most meticulous dollhouse—framing them in wide shots that accentuate their hyper-aestheticized surroundings and de-emphasize their agency.

This style, neatly complemented by Anderson's mannered, deadpan scripts, earned him adulation and a host of imitators, but by the time *The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou* rolled around it had begun to feel like something of a rut. You can watch dysfunction in dollhouse-land only so many times, it turns out, before what seemed unusual and exquisite starts to feel airless and claustrophobic, precious and (worst of all) twee.

With 2007's *The Darjeeling Limited*, Anderson tried to break out of this box, sending his protagonists—a trio of troubled siblings—on a rambling tour of India, and ditching the titular train midway through to explore a wider, wilder, less stage-managed setting. *Fantastic Mr. Fox*, by contrast, doubles down on artifice: With its stop-motion animals and painstakingly devised backdrops (it reportedly required 150 sets, 4,000 props, and over 500 puppets), it's the most self-contained cinematic world imaginable, luxuriating cheerfully in its vivid unreality.

And it works. This is Anderson's best effort since *The Royal Tenenbaums*, and possibly since *Rushmore*. But it isn't just because his devotion to insanely detailed world-building is a perfect fit for a movie populated exclusively by puppets. It's because this time he has a tightly plotted storyline to work with. Whereas Anderson's recent films have often felt interminable as well as claustrophobic, Dahl's novella is all narrative economy, and all action. It's a kind of animal-kingdom *Ocean's Eleven*, with the foxes as the sympathetic robbers, the vicious farmers Boggis, Bunce, and Bean as their odious antagonists, and the latter's storehouses—filled with chickens, cider, and all manner of delights—as the casino vault that our heroes need to penetrate.

The movie takes this story and makes a proper caper movie out of it. There are more hair's-breadth escapes and a bit more derring-do than in the book, and more characters as well. Like any good Robin Hood, Mr. Fox (voiced by Danny Ocean himself, George Clooney) ultimately needs a whole team to pull his heist off, and so his immediate family ends up supplemented by his opossum handyman (Wally Wolodarsky), his badger attorney (Bill Murray), and then a gaggle of weasels, otters, moles, and rabbits. And, like any good villains, the three farmers need a henchman, which means Willem Dafoe makes a welcome cameo, giving voice to a sinister yet oddly sympathetic Rat.

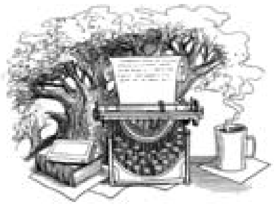
Anderson makes two more additions. The first is a family subplot, involving Mr. Fox's son, Ash (Jason Schwartzman), an undergrown cub who resents both his father and his more dashing and athletic cousin, Kristofferson (Eric Chase Anderson, Wes's brother). The second is a much stronger note of melancholy. In Dahl's book, the foxes and badgers are delighted to live permanently underground, feeding off the farmer's storehouses, while their enemies wait in vain for them to emerge. In the movie, things are more ambiguous. "I'm a wild animal," Mr. Fox tells Mrs. Fox (Meryl Streep), explaining why he can't stop taking risks, and there's a sense throughout the film that this wildness is imperiled—that the farmers may be defeated, but that the animals will be forced to domesticate themselves in order to survive, living more as parasites on civilization than as the hunters they were meant to be.

The father-son-nephew angst I could have done without. It feels like a discarded subplot from *The Royal Tenenbaums*, and Schwartzman, for all his charms, is too sardonically adult to voice a teenager.

But the melancholy works, echoing in the background of the story like a stanza from Philip Larkin's "Going, Going" ("And that will be England gone, / The shadows, the meadows, the lanes . . ."). It elevates the movie to something more than just a gorgeous, fascinating stunt, and it makes *Fantastic Mr. Fox* the second film this fall, after Jonze's *Wild Things*, to wring more pathos out of puppets than many movies manage to generate from flesh and blood. **NR**

Country Life

Out of Their Tree



RICHARD BROOKHISER

His farm is off a dead-end road that runs up into the hills; it sits in a natural amphitheater, like a giant NASCAR stadium built by the Romans and worn by time. The driveway in and the lower slopes are lined with apple trees.

Commercial orchards, still fighting the spread of tract houses, roll back from the Thruway and the state roads of the Hudson Valley. They grow apples for cider, or for supermarket shelves, to be displayed between the tangerines and the endives. This orchard is a much smaller operation, half U-pick for locals and leaf peepers, half obsession. The grower is an agronomist by profession. In a bad year, like this rain-soaked one, he begins by asking his clients to tell him what they *like* about farming; he knows they will be free with their complaints. After hours, he tends his apple army.

Apple trees look like people on parade, and harvesting apples is people-intensive. The trees stand in ranks. Their limbs resemble arms, stretching or signaling. In their youth the branches are encouraged by wooden braces to grow away from one another, and the weight of their fruit when they are heavy laden pulls them to the horizontal. The right way to pick an apple is to twist it up and see if it is ripe enough to slip off its stem. The long poles with baskets at their ends, like plastic lacrosse sticks, can produce the same motion, when nudged up from below, but crudely. The big growers bring in squads of Jamaicans or Central Americans to harvest their crop. My neighbor has his son, and together they can pick a lot of apples, but the grass is strewn with the ones that fell away before they could be plucked.

We associate apples with the fall of man, but that seems to be a late thought. Genesis speaks only of "the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden." Milton's Satan speaks of "those fair apples." By Cole Porter, they have become pure sex.

> You've got what Adam craved when he
> With love for Eve was tortured.
> She only had an apple tree,
> But you, you've got an orchard.

But how can that be true of what our mothers used to put in our lunch bags? One a day keeps the doctor away; one on the head made Newton think of gravity. How can anything so fresh be an occasion for sin?

Left to themselves, apples mutate uncontrollably, so growers employ grafts to make sure they get what they want. Agricultural-research stations produce new varieties by careful cross-fertilization. But once in a while, some new seedling pops up that everyone decides he likes; such varieties often retain the word "pippin" (Middle English for seed) in their names.

Some varieties do go back only a few centuries shy of Chaucer. Calville Blanc d'Hiver is a Norman apple from the late 16th century; Fameuse is a Québécois from the 17th. The Newtown Pippin is not a misremembering of Sir Isaac, but an 18th-century New Yorker, first grown in what is now Elmhurst, Queens (Newtown Creek is now an industrial toilet). Esopus Spitzenberg appeared in 1790, very close to the orchard I'm talking about: The Esopus River runs into the creek in my valley, before they both flow into the Hudson. These are all wonderful pungent fruits—my neighbor describes biting into a Calville Blanc d'Hiver as like having your ears twisted—but in the last half century they fell by the wayside, largely thanks to their looks. Calville Blanc d'Hiver is yellow-green and bulbous, Esopus Spitzenberg is yellow and red, Newtown Pippin is often russeted, or marked by rough brown streaks. In the mass market they were supplanted by apples like Macintosh and Red Delicious, red and sturdy enough to survive shipping: fine fruits in themselves, but a bit drained of zest by overproduction.

A lover can be next door to a bore, unless he persuades you to share his love: His world is the world for him. Apples have histories and genealogies, like hill tribes. Flavor and flesh suit them to different destinies: pies, cider, eating from the hand. Their ripening rolls through the season like Anglican church holidays: Some early ripeners are ready in September, when everyone is still thinking about baseball and last cookouts; in high latitudes, the late finishers race to be done before the frost ruins them.

If apples are one of the oldest crops in this part of the world, their diseases and insect predators must be one of the second oldest. Large orchards have no alternative to spraying. My neighbor, off by himself with only a few acres, can spray less, but he does spray some. Where apples are concerned all green is not sustainable. He can note the behavior of his enemies with amusement. One bug typically injects its eggs into plums, but sometimes it makes the mistake of impregnating an apple. But in that case, when the larvae stir, they can't pierce the apple skin, and the fruit becomes their tomb. All my pretty ones? Did you say all?

But most of the time the apple tree is a sturdy and amenable creature. After its apples and leaves fall, it stands naked all winter. Ice can maim it, but it does not bother about snow. In the spring it wraps itself in a turban of blossoms. When it becomes old and unfruitful, morel mushrooms grow at its feet. A thrifty grower will not let that happen; he culls his old trees (the wood is excellent for smoking), and plants young ones. They look fragile as a kindergartner's stick drawing, but they get right to work, putting out blossoms, and soon enough fruits.

On early fall weekends my wife and I would walk the aisles of our neighbor's supermarket, filling half-peck bags. He filled the corners with crabs, and made sure we were topped off. By now his surplus is in the cooler. **NR**

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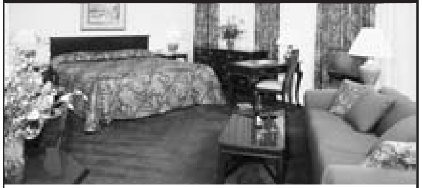

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Happy Warrior BY MARK STEYN

Gray Mountain State

As longtime readers know, the Demographic Deathwatch is not a novelty dance craze but a recurring feature of this column. But it's not just for Europe, Russia, China, and Japan anymore! Some parts of America are acquiring demographic profiles that would qualify them for EU membership.

Take the Green Mountain State. As Howard Dean was fond of saying during his 2004 presidential campaign, “Vermont is the way America ought to be.” If it is, we're all done for. Its marquee brands are either Canadian-owned (Vermont Castings wood stoves) or European-owned (Ben & Jerry's ice cream) and any non-foreign economic activity in the state long ago had any life regulated out of it.

But never mind all that. I ventured across the Connecticut River the other day and picked up the local paper, the *Journal Opinion* of Bradford, Vt. And among the other front-page headlines (“Newbury Will Mail Town Reports”; “Upcoming Sand Pile Talk”) was a story on how local school districts were in merger talks. No underlying reason was immediately given for the suddenly pressing need to merge: It seemed to be accepted as a natural feature of life that you can't do anything about. And then a gazillion paragraphs into the story, the reporter finally explained what was going on:

> Throughout Vermont, student enrollment at public elementary and secondary schools is declining. According to figures from the state's Department of Education, there were 104,559 students at those schools during the 1999–2000 school year. Last year, that figure was down to 92,572.

Which is quite a drop. In fact, Vermont school enrollments have declined 13 years in a row. Since 1996, they've fallen by 13 percent, slumping below 100,000 in 2004 and projected to fall below 90,000 in 2014. The part of the state that my corner of New Hampshire borders is admittedly rural, and it's not an unusual phenomenon for small towns to drain population to the big cities. But a couple of days later I was in the capital, Montpelier, and *its* school board is in merger talks with the neighboring towns of Berlin and Calais.

If schoolkids are thin on the ground, the state's total population has held steady—604,000 in 1999, 621,000 today. So Vermont is getting proportionately more childless. Which is to say that Vermont, literally, has no future.

One school-board member whose enrollment has bumped from 600 to 500 and is now heading down to 400 told the paper: “What are we going to do? We're not holding our breath that the state is going to solve this problem.”

I suppose by “the state” he means the department of education or, in a more general way, Montpelier. But in a very basic sense there is no “state”: Graying ponytailed hippies and chichi gay couples aren't enough of a population base to run a functioning jurisdiction. To modify Howard Dean, Vermont is the way liberals think America ought to be, and you can't make a living in it. So if you're a cash-poor but land-rich native Vermonter taxed and regulated and hedged in on every front, you face a choice: In the new North Country folk wisdom, they won't let you fish, so you might as well cut bait. Your outhouse is in breach of zoning regulations, so you might as well get off the pot. Etc. When he ran for president, Howard Dean was said to have inspired America's youth. In Vermont, he mainly inspired them to move somewhere else. The number of young adults fell by 20 percent during the Dean years. And what's left is a demographic disaster: The state's women have the second lowest birthrate in the nation, and the state's workforce is already America's oldest. Last year, Chris Lafakis of Moody's predicted Vermont would have “a really stagnant economy” not this year or this half-decade but for the next 30 years.

True, more gays appear to have moved in. In European terms, homosexuals are Vermont's Muslims—no disrespect to either party, I hasten to add, before you press that fatwa button. And gay second-homers still require enough of a local populace to generate a scenic plaid-clad coot or two chewing tobacco on the porch of a still-operating general store: It's kind of a downer to drive past a bunch of abandoned farms and collapsed barns en route to your weekend pad.

Nowhere in the news reports of school-merger talks does anyone suggest trying to reverse the policies that drive out young families and make Vermont—what's the word the eco-types dig?—“unsustainable.” When it comes to “climate change,” it's taken for granted that we can transform the very heavens if only we cap'n'trade'n'tax'n'regulate you even more.

But the demographic death spiral? That's just a fact of life, to question which puts you beyond political viability. The new Vermont prefers poseur politics and solutions for non-problems. A couple of years back, Gov. Jim Douglas, one of those famously moderate GOP New Englanders, finally noticed something was wrong in Green Mountain schoolhouses. So he acted decisively, signing legislation to protect the environment by forbidding school buses to run their engines while waiting for children to board. Tough on the kids: On many buses, there are too few students to generate much in the way of body heat. But you've gotta be able to prioritize: “This is a great step forward for our state,” declared the governor. The wheels are coming off the Vermont bus, but at least its engine won't be running as the thing falls apart. **NR**

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